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FIRST THINGS

October 1996
Number 66

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choosing abundance JOHN P. SISK

martha nussbaum, poets' defender ALAN JACOBS

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FIRST THINGS

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The Judicial Culture of Death

Michael Uhlmann's "The Legal Logic of Euthanasia" (June/July) is an outstanding essay on the two recent assisted-suicide decisions from the federal judiciary. I write with a few comments.

The Second Circuit in *Quill v. Vacco* employed equal-protection analysis under the Fourteenth Amendment to invalidate New York's prohibition on assisted suicide. This approach requires that legislation have a rational relationship to a legitimate state interest. The *Quill* court found that New York's statutes contained an improper action-inaction dichotomy. In other words, under the law, action (a physician's prescription of lethal doses of medication) was impermissible and inaction (a patient's refusal of nutrition and hydration, for example) permissible. The Second Circuit held this classification to be irrational, and it is hard to find fault with that conclusion. Indeed, Justice Scalia noted the untenable quality of this distinction in his concurring opinion in *Cruzan v. Director, Missouri Dept. of Health.* The reasonable line is drawn, as Justice Scalia argued, between various forms of inaction (refusal of extraordinary as opposed to ordinary measures).

The real problem with *Quill*—and it is this problem that demonstrates that the Second Circuit was as radical as the Ninth Circuit in *Compassion in Dying v. State of Washington*—is that it holds that the state has *no* legitimate interest in prohibiting assisted suicide. On this point the *Quill* court cites *In re Quinlan*, New Jersey's leading right-to-die case that is predicated on the disastrous line of federal privacy cases. More importantly, *Quill* invokes the notorious "Mystery Passage" (Gerard Bradley's phrase) from *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." This nonsense—which has absolutely no foundation in the text or history of the Constitution—is central to both *Quill* and *Compassion in Dying*.

The action-inaction problem can be remedied legislatively. That is, a legislature is free to revise a statute and still retain control over the fundamental issue. However, the Second Circuit's nullification of the state's legitimate interest in the preservation of life places the issue completely beyond the reach of a citizenry that is left to struggle under a judicially imposed culture of death.

Gregory J. Sullivan
Hamilton, NJ

Well-Spoken Angels

The evidence is everywhere but it took Wolfhart Pannenberg ("How to Think About Secularism," June/July) to make the point with clarity and precision: "In a secular milieu, even an elementary knowledge of Christianity—its history, teachings, sacred texts, and formative figures—dwindles. It is no longer a matter of rejecting Christian teachings; large numbers of people have not the vaguest knowledge of what those teachings are. This is a remarkable development when one considers how foundational Christianity is to the entire story of Western culture. The more widespread the ignorance of Christianity, the greater the prejudice against Christianity."

A few years ago, when I was teaching at UCLA, my neighbor—a visiting professor in Art History from Germany—complained that he was having great difficulty communicating his course material to undergraduate students. He felt that the problem was the predominantly Christian motif of the subject matter—medieval and renaissance painting. The students were not overtly antagonistic to Christian belief and traditions—they simply knew nothing about them. He noted that a significant number of his students had never heard of the Virgin Mary.

The same day I read the Pannenberg piece, I picked up the May 24 *Chronicle of Higher Education*, which cited an item in the *Cornell*

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Daily Sun: "'An invaluable copy of a Twelfth Century ivory plaque depicting the Enunciation was stolen from a glass display case in Goldwin Smith Hall early yesterday morning. The plaster 5-1/4 by 3-1/2 inch plaque contains a carving of the Enunciation scene in which the angels tell Mary that she will have a child.' A scene so named because they spoke with such clarity and precision, we suppose."

The *Chronicle*'s recognizing the mistake and thinking it reportable may mean that there's hope after all.

Charles N. Bertolami
San Francisco, CA

Evangelicals and Theology

Carl Braaten's interesting review essay ("A Harvest of Evangelical Theology," May) nevertheless misses the point by contrasting this scholarly harvest with my assessment of evangelicalism. My argument was not that academic theology was not being done but that theological ideas rest inconsequentially upon the evangelical world.

After all, add a few modest tests of religious commitment and the 34 percent who claim spiritual rebirth are whittled down to 9 percent. Ask whether there is, alongside the spiritual rebirth, a functioning worldview that is discernibly Christian and the 34 percent are reduced to 1 or 2 percent. One-third of the reborn say that all good people will go to heaven, regardless of their faith or its absence, and 11 percent say that sin is now an outmoded concept. Would Braaten not, on second thought, be willing to allow that the characteristic he discerned in the volumes he reviewed, that they are "deeply anchored in the scriptural sources," is not always widely apparent elsewhere in the evangelical world?

David Wells
Gordon-Conwell
Theological Seminary
South Hamilton, MA

Confusing the Faithful

Congratulations to Matthew Berke for his illuminating article on "God and Gender in Judaism" (June/July). Whether his reflections will prove a quixotic adventure in his own synagogue only time will tell, but his thesis will in any case apply a fortiori to Christian language about God, with its religion-specific doctrine of a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

One of the most persistent features of this heated debate is the conflation of metaphor and analogy. The difference between the two rests on a distinction first drawn by Aristotle and given new life by the work of Paul Ricoeur. *Analogy* is the legitimate extended use of a term across a spectrum of proportionate realities (a "healthy" diet and a "healthy" complexion being the standard examples), while *metaphor* is the arresting use of a term *improperly* used. According to Ricoeur, metaphor only functions "amidst the ruins of the literal sense." For example, when in Act V of *Othello* the eponymous hero—with his soul now irreparably poisoned by Iago's machinations—calls his heart "a cistern for foul toads to knot and gender in," the reader/playgoer realizes without being told that Othello's physical heart is not literally teeming with croaking frogs. . . .

Another sign of this more-than-obvious-but usually-implicit distinction is, as Mr. Berke points out, the consistent use of one set of pronouns for a person regardless of the metaphor of the moment. Thus when Jesus compares his longing to gather in the people of Jerusalem with the natural desire of a hen to gather in her chicks, no one would think of addressing Jesus as "she," for he is being metaphorical here. That is why Mr. Berke's observation that the Hebrew Bible continues to address God as "He" even when God, through the medium of the prophets, is using feminine metaphors to describe Himself is so crucial. . . .

Although these considerations imply that "Father" when applied to God is proper and analogical and "Mother" is metaphorical and "improper" (in the technical sense), and although this conclusion is bound to sound offensive to those who insist that only an affirmative-action Godhead will heal the wounds of sexism, these insights are nonetheless grounded in the most pervasive features of language and cannot be easily gainsaid without contorting theological and ordinary language beyond control. Perhaps I am wrong and it can be done, but Mr. Berke's examples from Reform Judaism certainly do not inspire much confidence in the project. . . .

In my opinion, failure to make these distinctions can only result in confusing the faithful. I realize this is the standard cant phrase for opposing any theological innovation, but I mean it in the most literal, non-metaphorical sense of that term. For the advocates of gender equality who insist that God must be equally addressed with male and female metaphors rest their case on a much more elementary confusion about the function of ordinary language: they confuse the faithful because their own minds are so confused about the hidden power and majesty of the language they once learned at their mothers' knees.

Edward T. Oakes, S.J.
Regis University
Denver, CO

Those of us who are deeply involved with Reform Jewish liturgy owe a debt to Matthew Berke for his thoughtful analysis of the recent trend toward degenderization in liberal Jewish prayerbooks.

His point about the theological hazards of feminizing the God of Israel is a potent argument for careful scrutiny of phrasing which addresses the Almighty as female. However, I am not persuaded that simple degenderization in the vernacular poses a threat to God as a personal deity. We have employed the 1994 gender-neutral *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat and Weekdays* at our synagogue for some nine months now. The changes in pronouns have not provoked strong responses from our congregants one way or the other. (Nor has there been a groundswell of support for setting up an altar to Astarte for the purpose of ritual debauchery.)

The aspect of this issue that remains for more detailed explo-

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ration has to do with the status of vernacular worship in the Jewish world of this and succeeding generations Since most Jewish children being born these days are growing up in the boundaries of the Jewish State, the role of any liturgical language other than Hebrew is of diminishing importance with the inexorable demographic shift of Jewry to Israel. The possibility of successfully rendering "Our Parent, Our Ruler" as "Our Mother, Our Queen" in contemporary Hebrew is about as remote as the likelihood that the present Knesset will vote to move the Jewish capital from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv or Caesarea.

Rabbi Jeffrey Ronald
Temple Emanu-El
Tucson, AZ

Catholic Wars

Paul Baumann asserts, in his review (June/July) of *Being Right: Conservative Catholics in America*, that I "explain the enthusiasm [of members of Catholics United for the Faith] for policing liturgies and dissent." Clearly, Mr. Baumann has taken a stereotype of this organization and applied it to my essay. I doubt that he could have read what I wrote. If he had, he would have found me explaining why the organization had had to shut down rogue chapters; how it broke with Lefebvrites in its midst; that it was *persona non grata* with a large number of traditionalist Catholic people. He would have reported how the founder, H. Lyman Stebbins, had risked losing the support and friendship of all sorts of conservative Catholics by throwing in with Pope Paul VI. This whole other side of CUF was simply ignored by Mr. Baumann.

Many of the people who have joined CUF over the years, complaining of liturgical excesses and doctrinal fuzziness in classroom and pulpit, have been of the middle and lower-middle classes. This sociological point should be of interest to Mr. Baumann, inasmuch as his publication, *Commonweal*, has always taken a sympathetic attitude toward those on the margins of American society. . . . When I worked at CUF from 1988 to 1994, it always struck me how the liberal Catholic intelligentsia were writing a kind of "populist" ecclesiology, not for the working classes, but for the edification of the lapsed graduates of Marymount and Manhattanville.

James A. Sullivan
Fairfield, CT

Paul Baumann replies:

Mr. Sullivan reads too much into what is a descriptive sentence. I wrote that he "explains" the enthusiasm for policing dissent; I didn't write that he embraces it uncritically. To be sure, such enthusiasm easily slides into intemperance, sectarianism, or worse, as CUF's internecine battles demonstrate.

How Mr. Sullivan gets from an imaginary slight to the usual cartoon of the "liberal Catholic intelligentsia" mystifies me. Just who is perpetuating stereotypes here?

Catholic Wars II

As a friend of James and Helen Hitchcock, a member of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars (FCS), a longtime supporter and ally of Women for Faith & Family (WFF), and one who admires Mother Angelica's enormous achievements with EWTN and related enterprises, I am deeply disturbed by an editorial policy that would lead you to publish Paul Baumann's review of *Being Right: Conservative Catholics in America*, edited by Mary Jo Weaver and Scott Appleby.

Weaver has said, in the Santa Clara Lecture she gave on April 15, 1996—which is a reflection on her experiences in editing the above book and entitled "What's Wrong With Being Right?"—that liberals would rather be interesting than right and thrive on dissent. I've no doubt that liberals would find fissures among the ranks of traditional Catholics no end interesting, and would not be above trying to create divisions where there were none. Indeed, I rather imagine they would thrive as much on the dissent they could encourage among the likes of us as on their own dissent from the Church.

Weaver and Appleby have very carefully targeted the Hitchcocks, the FCS, WFF, and Mother Angelica in what seems an obvious attempt to isolate them from everyone else and brand them as "fundamentalist." Apparently Baumann (and your editorial staff) saw merit in these tactics and indeed even welcomed the opportunity to suggest that some critical distance separates the above people and groups from the likes of the editors, contributors, and readers of FIRST THINGS. Baumann reminds us that the Editor-in-Chief of FIRST THINGS has said that "The first obligation is not to think like the Pope, but to think with the Pope," clearly implying that the Hitchcocks and Mother Angelicas of this world don't do this. . . .

Joyce A. Little
Professor of Theology
University of St. Thomas
Houston, TX

The editors reply:

We, too, are eager not to create divisions where there are none. It should be obvious that the editors do not always agree with the opinions expressed by reviewers. Such disagreements are in the nature of producing a serious journal of ideas.

Jews and (Nominal) Christians

Richard John Neuhaus takes me to task (Public Square, May) for some opinions concerning Christianity's origins and doctrine in my review of a study of eighteenth-century anti-Semitism (*Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 8 [1996], 283-85). He seems most particularly exercised by my assertion that the author of the work under review was "blind to the deep embeddedness of anti-Semitism in Christianity's self-definition," and a concomitant assertion that "the annihilation of Jewry is not an afterthought of Christianity, but its violent point of origin."

The very fact that his brief account turns immediately and viciously into an ad hominem attack, dripping sarcasm and vitriol in a most un-Christian manner, suggests I was not too far from the truth in suggesting—the real point of my review—that an assertion

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of the essential rightness of the Jewish religion (or any other religion) over the essential wrongness of Christianity tends to irritate Christians.

In the long 2,000 years of its history, this has proved to be true again and again, and is still true today, in Bosnia, in Eastern Europe, and in some significant pockets of the American scene. Indeed, far more disturbing than the petty nastiness of Neuhaus' response is its ratification of that history: since Christianity is a "truth" religion, one easily provokes Christians by suggesting they do not have the "Truth"—and a provoked Christian has been one of the nastiest of the human species throughout that long 2,000 years, especially long for its many victims.

That a Jew in America is relatively free from Christian violence has much to do with the nominalism of American Christianity today and little to do with Christianity's origins in an ever-increasing violence directed toward pharisaic Judaism. More to the point, I would not want to bask in the hopefulness of nominalism, as did German Jews in the nineteenth century. True, I am not threatened today by the 90 percent majority population—until Neuhaus tries to bully me into submission by hiding behind that majority as always right and peaceloving and "Christian." Jews know better: if 5 percent of the 90 percent becomes more than nominal, we have violence in front of abortion clinics; if 10 percent, we have "moral wars" being fought between "Christians" and heathens (or godless academics—code for Jews in some circles) for the souls of our schools and children; and, God help us all, if even 25 percent of the 90 percent of Christians today begin to hear voices again proclaiming absolute Truths, we had indeed better take cover.

Melvyn New
Department of English
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL

RJN replies:

Oh dear. And all I said is that I don't think the Christians of America want to kill Jews in general or Professor New in particular. They would want to, he responds, if they were really, and not just nominally, Christian. He appears to think it a fault of Christians that they tend to be irritated by such assertions. I expect the response of most Christians, if they knew about people who think the way Professor New thinks, would be one of bemusement. But then, that may be because they are only nominal Christians.

Not So Fragile an Institution?

I was pleasantly surprised by a favorable mention of my recent book on marriage and the Protestant Reformation (*Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* [Cambridge, 1995]) in Richard John Neuhaus' June/July essay on "Marriage, Divorce, and 'Pro-Family' Credibility." I am particularly indebted to the *Times Literary Supplement* review to which Neuhaus refers for liberating my study from the narrow realm of academe and presenting some of its arguments to a wider audience. Yet because some of his characterizations of these arguments appear to be drawn solely from the same *TLS* review, I am afraid that I must risk the semblance of ingratitude in order to provide some clarification.

Most importantly, I never say that "Protestant and Catholic teaching have had little effect on social reality." To the contrary, I argue that the very idea of marriage as holy, consensual, and indissoluble was a religious concept that at first appeared very alien to medieval Europeans yet after centuries of acculturation succeeded in permeating every level of society everywhere in Europe. It is, as Neuhaus suggests, hardly credible to maintain that "the Christian construal of marriage" has not been enormously influential in all Western cultures.

This influence, however, must be viewed as variable over time. Thus, although sixteenth-century Protestants and Catholics agreed on those aspects just mentioned, their practical interpretation of them could vary so much as to permit divorce and clerical marriage among Lutherans and Calvinists while prohibiting the same among Catholics. All of these religious reformers claimed to revere the "biblical and traditional norms" Neuhaus himself celebrates, yet like modern social critics they disagreed (violently at times) among themselves on the nature or implementation of such norms.

The Protestant "introduction" of divorce, for instance, was based on the apparent scriptural support of Matthew 19:9 and 1 Corinthians 7:13 as well as the "traditional" canon law practice of *divortium* (legal separation) in cases of adultery and malicious desertion. The only significant change—aimed at preventing greater harm to the institution of marriage—was to allow the innocent spouses in such cases to remarry. Marriage was still considered sacred and indissoluble, but proven adultery or abandonment now rendered the guilty party spiritually dead, thus freeing the innocent partner in the same manner as physical death. Meanwhile, Catholics continued to follow an alternate interpretation of the same "traditional and biblical norms," allowing only separation in the same instances.

All of this might fall into the category of interesting historical tidbits except for its potential to inform the current national debate about "traditional family values." Americans in the late twentieth century are heirs to many marriage traditions, and one of the oldest and most recurrent is public concern about its decline. In fact, the modern dilemma Neuhaus mentions regarding canon law, divorce, and family preservation is almost identical to the self-described crisis of sixteenth-century reformers. They too worried about extramarital sex and conception, about the disintegration of marriage as an institution, and about indifferent or hypocritical religious authorities. They responded with a massive pro-marriage campaign, conducted in the press and the pulpit, and backed up by governmental regulation and enforcement of "biblical and traditional norms" for marital behavior.

My book's apparently misunderstood conclusion on the minimal immediate impact of such activity,

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however, is not a denial of the importance of marriage as a social institution or of the possibility of social reform but rather a meditation on the evolutionary pace of significant changes in such basic social institutions as marriage. Neuhaus' concerns about the high rates of divorce and illegitimacy in our society, while certainly valid, might also take into account that every generation bears the conceit that its own problems are both unique and monumental.

Given the complexity of these two social issues, I hesitate to claim any insight except perhaps that vague appeals to "biblical and traditional norms" will yield no more clear-cut solutions—especially among Christian leaders—than they did four hundred years ago. Our cultural heritage is not a fragile ossified relic; it is the adaptable and dynamic experience of all those who came before us. If we claim to be listening to them, we must at least recognize that they, like us, speak with several voices. If we claim to honor them, we will not reduce their experience to a backdrop, favorable or unfavorable, for our own concerns.

Joel F. Harrington
Department of History
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, TN

Updike's Version

In "The Pleasure of Regretful Unbelief" (Public Square, June/July) Richard John Neuhaus is right on target in identifying John Updike as "religion-obsessed," although I would have preferred a less pejorative word than "obsessed." This is evident in his novels, short stories, poems, and nonfiction, especially his memoirs. In the latter he records his debt to G. K. Chesterton, who helped him to retain his Christian faith.

Hence, I was surprised to read later in the essay that Updike had misplaced his faith and could not find it again. "He provides his readers a momentary pleasure of pretended angst about their certitudes, a brush with ever so refined and regretful unbelief." This is not so, nor is it kindly put.

In this brief note it is impossible to present the massive amount of evidence to the contrary in each novel from *The Poorhouse Fair* to *In the Beauty of the Lilies*. Instead, let me recommend to you one of Updike's finest poems, "Seven Stanzas at Easter" (in *Verses*). It is a clear testament of Christian faith; unquestionably, he is on the side of being and the enemy of nothingness. He belongs rightly in the company of Saul Bellow, Walker Percy, Flannery O'Connor, Richard Wilbur, Theodore Roethke, and John Cheever—different as each is, but life-givers all of them. Let me end with a quotation from "Fever"—"God exists."

Joseph Schwartz, Editor
Renascence
Marquette University
Milwaukee, WI

Whose Words?

Richard John Neuhaus' rethinking the question of literary borrowing ("He Who Steals My Words . . ." January) invites serious reflection on the matter of ethical integrity. Historical-critical assumptions that undergird biblical scholarship over the last two centuries have taught us to believe that certain books of the Bible are pseudepigrapha, i.e., works written by unknown authors but attributed to apostles, prophets, or pillars of the faith. Ancient writers, it is maintained, were decidedly less interested in copyright and borrowed rather freely. Furthermore, motives for pseudonymity, we are assured, were noble, with no desire on the part of the unknown writer to deceive. Not insignificantly, however, an upshot of the assumption that false attribution—i.e., pseudonymity—occurs throughout biblical literature is that the biblical books lose their authority, since they are judged not to be authentic.

More recent scholarship, particularly among orthodox biblical scholars and even historians of no religious conviction, has demonstrated rather persuasively that the ancients in fact were *not* uncritical regarding literary borrowing, even when such practice was widespread. Indeed, the apostle Paul underscores the ethical implications of false attribution and literary borrowing, as if to say that originality and authenticity are a hallmark of Christian integrity: "I, Paul, write this . . . with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine: it is the way I write" (2 Thessalonians 3:17). It should even be noted that Paul is careful to distinguish in his writings between letters penned by a secretary—i.e., one merely recording the apostle's thoughts—and letters that come from his own hand.

Whereas false attribution appears to have plagued ancient religious writers, a tendency that seems to plague their modern counterparts is a failure to attribute sources at all. This aversion to footnotes is largely encouraged by a rather freewheeling attitude toward ghostwriting, the religious world's marketing of its superstars, and the considerable financial reward that attends this modern version of pseudepigraphy (a reward that customarily trumps any initial agonizing over the ethical question). In the end, both parties—the borrower and the borrowed—prostitute themselves for personal gain. In the end, both have sold a part of themselves.

That this phenomenon occurs among people professing faith is not as disturbing as the *extent* to which it is practiced. Let us hope that the Christian community continues to scrutinize the practice, at the core of which stands no less than personal integrity and religious authority, not to mention the reputation of the Lord of Hosts.

J. Daryl Charles
Ellicott City, MD

Correction:
Because of an error in editing, the article "Bonhoeffer and the Sovereign State" (August/September) incorrectly placed the "July 20th Plot" to assassinate Hitler in 1945, rather than 1944.

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This Time

Neoconservatism Redux

James Nuechterlein

I made a vow, after finishing my May column on "The End of Neoconservatism," that this was, for me, the *end* of neoconservatism. Like most writers, I try to avoid repeating myself, and yet over the years I have written so often on that subject that now merely to think of it induces acute glazed-eye syndrome. No more, I pledged. Better, say, an in-depth retrospective on the lost opportunities of the Law of the Sea Treaty. Better an analysis of monetary trends in Gabon. Better anything.

Then I ran across Mark Gerson's *The Neoconservative Vision* (Madison, 368 pp., $26.95), which he has supplemented with a collection of classic neocon essays, *The Essential Neoconservative Reader* (Addison-Wesley, 467 pp., $27.50). Someone in the office suggested that I review the Gerson volumes, both as a student of the movement and as an occasional participant in its activities. (Gerson, who has read everything that every neoconservative has ever written, cites me a handful of times.) When our beloved Editor-in-Chief seconded the motion, I reluctantly agreed. Thus one last (this time I really mean it) encounter with the neoconservative experience.

The first thing to be said about *The Neoconservative Vision* is how good it is. Gerson has not only read everything on his subject, he has thoroughly absorbed, synthesized, and analyzed what he has read. (This is the more impressive because he is so young: he graduated from Williams College—where the book began as an honors project—in 1994, and he is currently in law school at Yale.) There are some minor errors of fact, a few questionable interpretations, and too many typos, but for the most part the book gets things right.

Gerson traces the neoconservative impulse from its prehistory in the liberal anticommunism of the fifties through its particular origins as a reaction against the radicalizing of liberalism in the sixties to its flourishing thereafter as a defense of American bourgeois democratic culture against its various critics on the left. Along the way he lays out with admirable clarity neoconservative positions on affirmative action, student radicalism, Israel, capitalism, government regulation, multiculturalism, religion, the family, and much, much else. (The essays collected in *The Essential Neoconservative Reader* provide an illustrative sampling of the literary flair and polemical zest of the leading neoconservative writers.)

All this is by now well-traveled territory for many of us, but Gerson provides a useful map and serves as a reliable guide to those unfamiliar with the terrain. And his coverage is so thorough that even veterans of the neoconservative wars will find themselves reminded on occasion of half-forgotten skirmishes and forays.

Particularly useful is Gerson's specification of the constituting notions underlying neoconservatism. He identifies four fundamental principles: 1) Life and politics are infinitely complex, so beware of utopian schemes and large-scale ventures in social engineering; 2) Human nature is mixed, and the political order cannot be arranged on the assumption of altruism (as Reinhold Niebuhr put it, "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary"); 3) Man is a social animal, which is to say that communities make claims on individual autonomy and that "freedom is an essential good, but it must serve the larger end of societal virtue"; 4) Ideas rule the world, and "a society that does not have the self-confidence to defend its principles will fall prey to the forces intent on subverting or altering those principles." Others might add to that list of first principles or elaborate them in somewhat different ways, but I suspect that few neoconservatives would have any fundamental quarrel with Gerson's outline.

Gerson concedes that the neoconservatives no longer exist as a distinct movement, but he records their demise as their triumph: "Their ideological development over the past fifty years has culminated in what we now identify as American conservatism; in that sense, they have been so successful that it is now appropriate to drop the prefix 'neo' from their appellation." That, I think, is rather too triumphalist a judgment. A number of conservative intellectuals (most prominently William F. Buckley, Jr.) might legitimately quarrel with the implication that conservatism owes its ascendancy simply to the neocons.

Beyond that, the neoconservative drift to the right over time is not quite the unproblematic stately procession Gerson describes. Indeed, his own list of thirty-nine prominent neoconservative intellectuals includes at least three figures—Daniel Bell, Martin Peretz, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan—who either never joined the movement or who at some point defected from it because of disagreements over its political direction. That doesn't mean they were right, of course (I don't think they were), but it does complicate the story.

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My own sense is that a number of neoconservatives found themselves thoroughly surprised—and in some cases somewhat unsettled—at how far to the right their political journey had led from its beginnings in the mid-sixties. Gerson does not note that neoconservatism's first political manifestation was as the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, and most neoconservatives entertained hopes of reclaiming the Democratic Party and mainstream liberalism for their cause long after those hopes had lost touch with political reality. Even as they for so long insisted, against the evidence, that they were neoliberals rather than neoconservatives, so they went to quite extraordinary lengths to avoid identification as Republicans. I know of neoconservatives who have voted Republican for two decades who remain registered as Democrats. (On these matters, Irving Kristol, the leading neoconservative, was notably unrepresentative.)

This reluctance to admit being what they were was part political and intellectual habit, part ethnic heritage. Most of the leading neoconservatives were Jewish (only fourteen of Gerson's thirty-nine prominent neoconservatives are non-Jews) and Jews found it extraordinarily difficult to think of themselves as conservatives, much less Republicans. In the American context, to be a Jew—even more a Jewish intellectual—was to be a person of the left. Norman Podhoretz's working title for his memoir *Breaking Ranks* was *A Traitor to My Class*. Many Jews on the left considered him a traitor to his religion as well. (The same pressures existed, though to a much lesser extent, among Catholic neoconservatives.)

For most neoconservatives, then—Irving Kristol again excepted—the move from left to right was personally and intellectually wrenching. And those who made it often had the zeal of converts. That imbued the movement with energy and enthusiasm. It also made it acutely sensitive to signs of ideological backsliding.

Neoconservatism was not always the tidy and seamless affair Gerson depicts. There was more intramural bickering among its adherents than he records. There was also, among some of them, a greater concern for purity of doctrine than he seems aware of. Perhaps you had to be there: I recall attending neoconservative functions during the 1980s and being struck by the extent and intensity of criticism of the Reagan Administration for its ideological unreliability. (The Bush presidency, at least in its last two years, elicited only general contempt.) Like most intellectuals, neoconservatives had little patience for the inevitable—and necessary—compromises of politics.

But whatever its marginal flaws, neoconservatism was, in my view, a great and good cause. It mounted a spirited and sophisticated defense of the American social order against the utopian and rage-filled assaults of its radical critics—a defense that, to its great shame, the mainstream liberal community found itself unable or unwilling to provide. Neoconservatives were derided by their enemies for their nostalgia for the "American celebration" of the postwar years. Most of them did not take that criticism as an insult.

Neoconservatism was also a grand adventure. Gerson quotes George Weigel: "There is a kind of Henry V quality about all this. 'We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.' I mean, that really is true. [We are] people who have been together in a great moral cause. . . . It just forms very lasting bonds of affection." For an understanding of the neoconservative adventure, Mark Gerson's two books provide an excellent place to start. FT

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Opinion

Mercy Killing at Golgotha

Jeffrey E. Ford

L. Annaeus Seneca,
Greetings from your uncle Claudius in Palestine.

Whoever thought it best to extend the empire to this gods-forsaken corner of land ought to be put to the sword. There is nothing here except zealotry and fanaticism, political and religious. The population is in perpetual revolt and it takes a legion just to hold Jerusalem. The Jews neither honor the gods nor delight in the civilities of life. Their food is plain, their language coarse, their women rude. Even a Deputy Governor suffers in this desert. When the people are not driving him mad, the heat is.

I write, however, not to complain of my tribulations. I gladly endure them for the sake of Rome—and besides, soon enough, I return home, my service accomplished, my future secured. Rather, I have a story I want to tell you, perhaps to explain to you something more of my philosophy of life, continuing discussions you and I have had before.

Yesterday we executed a rebel. The man was in his early thirties, about your age. He was Jewish, and was put to death by popular acclaim. As is the custom, he was scourged before being forced to drag his cross to the place of execution, where he was nailed and left to die. The man was rather weak and expired quickly, as far as these things go.

Of course, no one dies immediately when crucified. This death is as painful a way to die as any I have seen. Spikes are driven through the criminal's wrists and ankles, his torn flesh almost immediately beginning to swell. As the man's own weight pulls at his wounds, the slightest movement, even breathing, becomes agonizing. The man slowly loses strength, painfully shifting and propping his body to take in every possible breath. Very few give themselves over to death, but scream and shriek until they lose the power to protest their pain. Finally, in the criminal's chest—crushed as though piled under heavy stones—his heart bursts and he dies in one last moment of agony.

You have seen crucified slaves and know what I am talking about. You also know what I believe about crucifixion. I have no objection to capital punishment. It alone avenges capital crimes and ensures public order. Without the sword, our empire would collapse in a day. Yet I cannot bring myself to enjoy crucifixion as so many of the legionnaires do. This form of execution causes not only men in the ranks but even centurions and tribunes to adopt an excessively harsh view of life, sometimes laughing and joking a few feet away from a bloody cross—like mere barbarians. Yesterday, I saw several soldiers gambling for the cloak of the condemned criminal, making sport of his last possession, stained with his own blood. The sight cost me a night's sleep, and not for the first time.

Still, no matter what the legions do to subject peoples and condemned criminals, I am convinced that it is my duty to live without any differentiating among men. You know my thoughts. I believe all men to be equal before nature, and thus acts just or merciful for Romans are also just or merciful for Jews. Discovering the standard by which to judge all human beings seems to me, in fact, to be the very goal of philosophy. I do not treat Jews and Romans differently, at least as far as ethics is concerned.

And that is why I intervened on behalf of the condemned rebel yesterday. As you know, it is accepted in Rome that a man should be free to commit suicide if he is about to be overwhelmed by calamity, persecution, or suffering. There is not a family in Rome that has not stood by while a loved one opened his veins and bled to death in a tub of warm water. It is my belief that this ethically justifiable mercy should be extended to Jews and barbarians as well, without favoritism or partiality. Such is the rule of nature and philosophy.

Therefore, I treated the crucified Jew as I would have a Roman. When he was taken to his place of execution, suffering agonizing pain after being nailed to his cross, I asked the attending centurion for permission to alleviate the man's pain. Because the officer owed me a favor, he granted my request and allowed me to provide a humane death to the suffering Jew. I filled a bowl with wine, gall, and arsenic, then offered it to the condemned man. I could tell by his eyes that he understood the nature of my offer. He drank of the wine. A few minutes later the man was dead, spared the pointless and extended agony of crucifixion. Pilate had his corpse and the criminal his release from hours of excruciating suffering, pain devoid of value and purpose.

Yet something bothers me when I think about the scene. I offered the poisoned wine to the criminal just as he was giving his friends and family final advice and instructions. Because he drank of my wine as soon as it was offered, he was unable to speak any longer, an effect that he evidently had not expected. I have never seen such despair as I saw when the man

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realized that he could no longer talk. Though he had uttered only a few anguished words beforehand, after drinking the wine he could no longer speak at all. His throat was constricted too tightly for him to utter a single word as he hung on his cross for a minute or two, gasping and trembling, and trying to speak. Finally, he cried out with all of the strength that remained in his body, *"It is not finished!"* Then he died.

I do not know what he wanted to say or to accomplish hanging from a cross, but he apparently believed that something had been missed—and it was my fault. Just as he died, he looked in my direction, searing my soul with a look of furious indignation—as though I were the one who had condemned him to a pointless death on a cross, as though I were his betrayer. This criminal, who had made a point of forgiving his executioners minutes earlier, looked upon me with an anger that was inhuman. I saved the man from a death of hours, perhaps days, yet he looked at me in hatred.

It is not hard to imagine why he would have despised Pilate, the military guard, or the taunting mob, but he hated me—the one Roman in the whole empire who pitied his suffering. Perhaps he did have a few things to say to his family, but what great thing could he accomplish on a cross? Unless he had the power to tear himself from his tree, it was certain that he would die a terrible and painful death. And even fools admit that nothing good can be accomplished by needless suffering and useless pain.

I saved the man pain and humiliation, and I saved his family from the extension of their sorrow. Does a man stricken with a tumor earn virtue by living on in pain? Does a woman consumed by plague accomplish anything by allowing her death to linger for a few days more? Are families honored by sharing in the agonies of death?

A reasonable man would have thanked me for my mercy, for giving to a condemned Jew the same privilege enjoyed by a Roman Senator. And the whole world would agree. Only this one damnable Jew seems to have thought that he had something to gain by suffering torture and humiliation for a few hours more. Perhaps you can see why I loathe living in this desert.

I must go now. There is work to be done. Pilate has just sent word that another crucifixion has been decreed—this time a miracle-working prophet found guilty of blasphemy and sedition. I suspect even Rome will feel tremors from this execution, since the man has a large following of fanatical disciples, some of whom are armed.

Perhaps I can calm the outcry at his death by alleviating his suffering as I did the other condemned rebel. An act of mercy may do some good. And since the man is something of a philosopher himself, though in a rude and coarse manner, perhaps he will appreciate my gesture better than did the other Jew, especially since he has often expressed a disdain for death—provoking Roman and Jew alike with his teachings and antics. In any case, it will be interesting to see if this Jewish rabbi can die with the dignity of a Roman philosopher.

Our lives are completed in our deaths, Seneca. That is why I will preach the virtue of a noble death to the end of my own days and hope that you will do the same. No man can live well who is not prepared to die well. So always live and die as a Roman. And remember, too, to sacrifice to the gods whenever you worship at the temples. The gods must be placated if our house is to continue to rise. And whatever their reasons are, they insist upon blood sacrifice. So offer a ram for me, since it is nearly impossible to perform the proper sacrifices while living among the Jews. I hope to see you in Rome by winter.

Your uncle,
Claudius Letum Dignitate

Jeffrey E. Ford *is Assistant Professor of History at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa.*

How Partisan Are the Bishops?

Robert A. Sirico

In preparation for the election year, the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) issued a statement on "Political Responsibility." Numerous critics have asserted that the statement, despite its claim to be nonpartisan, aligns the Catholic Church with the positions of the Democratic Party, with the notable exception of abortion. Defenders of the USCC have vigorously challenged that assertion. A close comparison of passages from the USCC statement with passages from the 1992 platforms of the two major parties on the same topics (the platforms available to the writers of "Political Responsibility") provides, I believe, the information necessary to judge the partisanship of the USCC statement.

I. Jobs

USCC: The most urgent priority for domestic economic policy is to create jobs with adequate pay and decent working conditions. High levels of unemployment and underemployment are morally unacceptable in a nation with our economic capacity. The minimum wage should be raised to help workers and their families live decent lives. We reaffirm the

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Church's traditional teaching in support of the right of all workers to organize and bargain collectively and to exercise these rights without reprisal.

Democrats: Our workplaces must be revolutionized to make them more flexible and productive. We will reform the job safety laws to empower workers with greater rights and to hold employers accountable for dangers on the job. . . . We will honor the work ethic—by expanding the earned income tax credit so no one with children at home who works full-time is still in poverty, . . . by supporting the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively without fear of intimidation or permanent replacement during labor disputes.

Republicans: The engines of growth in a free economy are small businesses and jobs. . . . To create jobs and keep small businesses growing, the Republican Party supports increased access to capital for business expansion, exporting, long-term investment, opportunity capital for the disadvantaged, and capital to bring new products and new technologies to the market. . . . Unlike the Democrats, we believe the private sector, not the federal government, should set prevailing wage rates.

II. Health Care

USCC: Our criteria for reform include respect for life, priority concern for the poor, universal coverage, pluralism, cost containment and controls, and equitable financing.

Democrats: All Americans should have universal access to quality, affordable health care—not as a privilege, but as a right. . . . We will enact a uniquely American reform of the health care system to . . . cover all Americans regardless of preexisting conditions . . . provide a safety net through support of public hospitals; provide for the full range of reproductive choice—education, counseling, access to contraceptives, and the right to a safe legal abortion

Republicans: Americans . . . have the best health care providers, the best hospitals, and the best medical technology. . . . Republicans believe government control of health care is irresponsible and ineffective. We believe health care choices should remain in the hands of the people, not government bureaucrats. . . .

III. Welfare

USCC: We are not defenders of the welfare status quo; however, we oppose abandonment of the federal government's essential role in helping families overcome poverty and meet their children's basic needs. We advocate welfare reform which protects human life and human dignity. (We therefore oppose family-cap and child-exclusion measures, which encourage abortion without addressing the fundamental contributors to illegitimacy.) . . . The goal of reform is reducing poverty and dependency, not cutting resources and programs.

Democrats: Welfare should be a second chance, not a way of life. We want to break the cycle of welfare by adhering to two simple principles: no one who is able to work can stay on welfare forever, and no one who works should live in poverty. We will continue to help those who cannot help themselves. . . . We'll invest in education and job training, and provide the child care and health care they need to go to work and achieve long-term self-sufficiency.

Republicans: Welfare is the enemy of opportunity and stable family life. . . . Today's welfare system is anti-work and anti-marriage. It taxes families to subsidize illegitimacy. It rewards unethical behavior and penalizes initiative. It cannot be merely tinkered with by Congress and legislators; it must be recreated by states and localities. . . . Welfare can no longer be a check in the mail with no responsibility. We believe fathers and mothers must be held responsible for their children.

IV. Children

USCC: We urge a reordering of priorities to focus more on the needs and potential of the nation's children. If society seeks to help children, it has to support families, since children's lives are nurtured or neglected, enhanced or diminished by the quality of family life. The undeniable fact is that our children's future is shaped both by the values of their parents and the policies of our nation.

Democrats: Governments don't raise children, people do. . . . We need a national crackdown on deadbeat parents, an effective system of child support enforcement nationwide, and a systematic effort to establish paternity for every child. We must also make it easier for parents to build strong families through pay equity.

Republicans: Republicans believe government should strengthen families not replace them. Today, more then ever, the traditional family is under assault. We welcome change that corrects the mistakes of the past, particularly those at war with the family. For more than three decades, the liberal philosophy has assaulted the family on every side. . . . Republicans trust parents and believe they, not courts and lawyers, know what is best for their children.

V. Taxes

USCC: We support effective incentives for charitable giving, an earned-income tax credit that ensures that working families will not have to raise their children

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in poverty, and a tax code that reflects traditional Catholic teaching that tax rates should reflect a person's ability to pay.

Democrats: Instead of a sweeping capital gains windfall to the wealthy and those who speculate, we will create an investment tax credit and a capital gains reduction for patient investors in emerging technologies and new businesses. . . . People should share in society's common costs according to their ability to pay.

Republicans: When state and local levies are included, the tax burden exceeds one-third of family income. The increase in the effective federal tax rate since 1950 has now swallowed up an ever-increasing share of a family's earnings. Instead of working to improve their family's standard of living, they must work to feed government's gluttonous appetite. This is a scandal.

VI. Crime

USCC: In confronting the culture of violence our church calls for: . . . Curbing the easy availability of deadly weapons. Supporting community approaches to crime prevention and law enforcement. . . . Attacking the root causes of violence, including poverty, substance abuse, lack of opportunity, racism, and family disintegration.

Democrats: The pervasive fear of crime disfigures our public life and diminishes our freedom. . . . The simplest and most direct way to restore order in our cities is to put more police on the streets. . . . We will combat street violence and emphasize building trust and solving the problems that breed crime. . . . It is time to shut down the weapons bazaars. We support a reasonable waiting period to permit background checks for purchases of handguns, as well as assault weapons controls to ban the possession, sale, importation, and manufacture of the most deadly assault weapons. . . .

Republicans: Violent crime is the gravest domestic threat to our way of life. . . . It is the legacy of liberalism that elevates criminals' rights above victims' rights, that justifies soft-on-crime judges approving early-release prison programs, and that leaves law enforcement officers powerless to deter crime with the threat of certain punishment. [We should] restore the severest penalties for the most heinous crimes, to ensure swift and certain punishment, and to end the loopholes that let criminals go free. . . .

VII. Civil Rights/Affirmative Action

USCC: Signs of increased racial hostility poison our society. Such discrimination constitutes a grave injustice and an affront to human dignity. It must be aggressively resisted by every individual and rooted our of every social institution and structure. Discrimination on the basis of race, sex, or other arbitrary standards can never be justified. Where the effects of past discrimination persist, society has the obligation to take positive steps to overcome the legacy of injustice. We support judiciously administered affirmative action programs as tools to overcome discrimination and its continuing effects. . . . Racism is not merely one sin among many. It is a radical evil dividing the human family.

Democrats: Democrats will continue to lead the fight to ensure that no American suffers discrimination or deprivation of rights on the basis of race, gender, language, national origin, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, or other characteristics irrelevant to ability. We support the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment; affirmative action; stronger protection of voting rights for racial and ethnic minorities, including language access to voting; and continued resistance to English-only pressure groups.

Republicans: The protection of individual rights is the foundation for opportunity and security. . . . We declare that bigotry and prejudice have no place in American life. We denounce all who practice or promote racism, anti-Semitism, or religious intolerance. Promoting opportunity, we reject efforts to replace equal rights with quotas or preferential treatment.

VIII. Education

USCC: All persons . . . have an inalienable right to a quality education. . . . We advocate . . . adequate public and private funding to make a quality education available for all citizens and residents; government and voluntary action to reduce inequalities of educational opportunity . . . ; orderly compliance with legal requirements for racially integrated schools and additional voluntary efforts to increase racial and ethic integration . . . ; equitable tax support . . . ; salaries and benefits of teachers and administrators that reflect the principles of economic justice.

Democrats: Education is a cooperative enterprise that can only succeed if everyone accepts and exercises personal responsibility. Students must stay in school and do their best; parents must get involved in their children's education; . . . government must end the inequalities that create educational ghettos among school districts and provide equal educational opportunity for all. . . .

Republicans: Parents have the right to choose the best school for their children. Parents are the first and most important teachers of their children. They should have the right not only to participate in their

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child's education, but to choose for their children among the broadest array of educational choices. . . . We also support the right of parents to provide quality education through home-based schools. . . . We believe that . . . quality is best encouraged by minimizing government regulation.

IX. Environment

USCC: The whole human race suffers as a result of environmental blight, and generations yet unborn will bear the cost for our failure to act today. What is needed is the will to make changes in policy and lifestyles, to arrest, reverse, and prevent environmental decay and pursue the goal of sustainable, equitable development for all. . . .

Democrats: For ourselves and future generations, we must protect our environment. We will protect our old-growth forests, preserve critical habitats, provide a genuine "no net loss" policy on wetlands. . . .

Republicans: We hold the resources of our country in stewardship. . . . Cleaning up America is a labor of love for family, neighborhood, and nation. . . . First, environmental progress is integrally related to economic advancement. Second, economic growth generates the capital to pay for environmental gains. Third, private ownership and economic freedom are the best security against environmental degradation.

X. Abortion

USCC: We support policies and laws that encourage childbirth over abortion and urge government and the private sector to provide programs that assist pregnant women and their children, especially those who are poor. . . .We reject the 1973 Supreme Court abortion decisions which deny legal protection to unborn children, and we support efforts to prohibit or restrict abortion legislatively, and to provide constitutional protection for unborn human life.

Democrats: Democrats stand behind the right of every woman to choose, consistent with *Roe v. Wade*, regardless of ability to pay, and support a national law to protect that right. The goal of our nation must be to make abortion less necessary, not more difficult or more dangerous. We pledge to support contraceptive research, family planning, comprehensive family life education, and policies that support healthy childbearing and enable parents to care most effectively for their children.

Republicans: We believe the unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed. We therefore reaffirm our support for a human life amendment to the Constitution, and we endorse legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to unborn children.

Comment: The similarity of policy messages in the Democratic and USCC documents is striking. Both stress egalitarianism, government action, and redistribution of resources. The Republican platform, in contrast, emphasizes the limits of government and the potential of nongovernment institutions—family, free market, and civil society—in meeting human needs.

Defenders of the USCC statement notwithstanding, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the statement provides a religious gloss on the policy directions advanced by secular Democrats, a gloss that is otherwise missing because of the secular interest groups the Democratic Party has served for decades. Whether the "political responsibility" of Catholic voters requires them to support the directions favored by the Democratic Party is, to say the least, open to challenge.

Robert A. Sirico *is President of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

Apologizing to the Babies

Joan Frawley Desmond

Japan has been called "abortion heaven." The Ministry of Health and Welfare reported 364,350 abortions in 1994, though that figure does not include abortions by the private physicians whose lucrative business has reportedly blocked distribution of the birth control pill. In a 1982 survey conducted by the Kyodo News Service, about 60 percent of women in their forties with college degrees and executive-level husbands admitted having had one or more abortions.

No one in Japan seems willing to speak about the moral brutality of the Japanese custom of abortion used as birth control. Even a Jesuit missionary, residing there for half a century, cannot recall a single homily on the subject. Japan's abortion industry appears to drift along by itself, an anomaly in a relatively nonviolent society, graced by intact families and safe streets.

And yet, though there is no public debate, the unborn have not been forgotten. With no prompting, Japanese couples have begun acknowledging their role in the death of their own unborn

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child. They have done this not through talk-show therapy, but in a ritualized, thoroughly Japanese, manner. While couples bow to the necessity of abortion—saying, *shikata ganai,* "there's nothing to be done"—millions have been drawn to a Buddhist cult devoted to Jizō, the protector of aborted, miscarried, and stillborn children. Once a minor bodhisattva in the Buddhist pantheon, Jizō has revived the fortunes of local temples that perform *mizuko kuyo,* the ritual designed to assist in the peaceful resettlement of "returned" children who cannot pass alone across the river separating the living from the dead.

The Jizō figurines crowd hillside cemeteries, coastal promontories, and city temples. In Kamakura, just to the side of the famous Hasedera Temple, is an area devoted to a flourishing Jizō cult, with a large covered statue of the bodhisattva surrounded by a battalion of small Jizō figures, some of them decorated with traditional red capes or bibs, a few even accompanied by toys. A message board stands next to the bodhisattva, allowing parents to leave signed apologies and prayers. The Jizō figurines (which cost about $80), fresh flowers, and other gifts can be purchased at the main temple. The statues remain in place for some time, after which a formal offering is made for the soul of the aborted child. At the site, a short, printed explanation of the plight of "returned" souls—known as *mizuko,* or water children—suggests that they will remain in limbo if parents neglect their religious obligations.

There is just a hint of coercion here, but it is enough to provoke accusations of extortion from feminists and others who believe the cult manipulates guilt-ridden parents. The Hasedera Temple skirts the threat of *tatari,* or retribution, from the souls of aborted children. But some new temples and cemeteries devoted to the Jizō cult have gained a reputation for both questionable theology (the *mizuko kuyo* ritual becoming an implicit kind of exorcism), and, occasionally, even criminal blackmail for money to forestall bad luck.

Buddhist scholars, too, are uncomfortable with the Jizō phenomenon, which borrows heavily from medieval Japanese folk practices and Shinto beliefs. But it is significant that Buddhist thinkers avoid the moral issues that preoccupy Western societies. Rather, scholars bemoan the cult's accommodation of *tatari,* as well as the garish commercial trappings. Within Buddhism, few seem prepared to address the ambiguous, even mysterious motives of Jizō devotees. Yet Buddhist leaders have not blocked the cult. Temple priests understand that this grassroots movement plays an essential role in Japanese culture, filling the moral vacuum that organized religion has left untouched.

Jizō began to attract followers in the 1970s, after a decade of steadily rising abortion rates. The cult defies simple explanations, and Westerners should not shrug off this memorial service as a peculiar, if haunting, foreign custom. Its importance lies in its revelation of the damaging consequences of abortion. Despite the lack of moral guidance, Japanese parents want to admit wrongdoing. At the same time, however, the narrow scope of the ritual (which promises purification without conversion of the heart) serves as a warning of what the West could become: a society that goes on without a thought of redemption.

In the past, even when abortion was officially illegal, the Japanese exhibited a pragmatic approach to new life that threatened the survival or prosperity of the family. Many feudal peasants—along with wealthier Japanese—practiced infanticide as a method of "spacing" children in medieval times. And while Japanese Buddhism officially frowned on such practices, local monks sympathized with the plight of overburdened peasants. The thorough penetration of Confucianism and Shintoism into Japanese Buddhism produced a patchwork religion that shrank from moral absolutes, including the commandment against killing. It may be true that infanticide was occasionally practiced in medieval Europe, but Catholic theology never condoned the destruction of developing human life. In contrast to medieval Catholicism, writes William LaFleur—author of an important, if partisan, study, *Liquid Life: Abortion and Buddhism in Japan*—Japan's Buddhists "saw life as a kind of ontological chess; its movements could be forward, lateral, or backward on the board. This opened up a wider range of possibilities."

The moral force of Japanese Buddhism was also stunted by another trend in the nation's development: organized religion's submission to political power. This pattern of church-state relations eventually resulted in the ascendance of "Japanism" (described by Karel van Wolferen in *The Enigma of Japanese Power* as a "surrogate religious force"). As secular authority became fundamental, Buddhism lost its moral force. Today most Japanese view Buddhism as a funerary component of an undifferentiated Japanese religion, characterized by a preference for ritual activity over transcendent spiritual and moral beliefs.

During the early modern era, political leaders, not temple priests, challenged the "culling" of unwanted children. The Meiji Restoration of the 1860s paved the way for the criminalization of abortion, though a penal code largely imported from France could not dislodge the feudal vision of human life as ontological chess. Much later, in the years preceding the Second World War, Tokyo sought to increase birth rates to fuel its war effort. Abortion was viewed as a political crime, and state Shintoism applauded parents who produced large numbers of children. After the war, a baby boom spurred a dramatic return to illegal abortions, leading the government to introduce the 1948 Eugenic Protection Laws that opened the door to abortion-on-demand by the following year.

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The democratic, affluent Japan of the 1990s has moved beyond the political and economic conditions that shaped the nation during the thirties and forties. Yet, wartime and even medieval Japan surface in unpredictable and surprising ways. Certainly the past has tainted any attempt to carve out a political solution to the problem of abortion. While Catholics quietly provide anti-abortion counseling and services for unwed mothers, only the neo-Shintoists occasionally denounce abortion publically—and Japan's steeply declining birth rate may be the prime reason for this concern.

While political-legal intervention remains unlikely, the Jizō cult has emerged as a stopgap response to abortion. Some observers contend that Japanese parents participate in the ritual as a way of affirming their essential goodness. According to LaFleur, prayers, gifts, and financial donations reverse the impression that one's child has been treated summarily and dehumanized. Possibly, the affluence of modern Japan has deepened distaste for abortion, which can no longer be explained away as a necessity for family survival. Or perhaps Japanese women want to move beyond both the moral passivity and the childlike dependence on physicians' directives that have fed the high abortion rate. Whatever the reasons, the number of abortions is falling among younger married women.

Abroad, the popularity of the Jizō cult has provoked a mixed response from activists on both sides of the abortion debate. Citing the cult, American pro-lifers argue that even non-Christian cultures recognize that abortion involves the destruction of human life. But feminist writer Naomi Wolf, in a 1995 *New Republic* cover story, "Our Bodies, Our Souls," noted the Jizō ritual and seemed to imply that a Westernized form of the memorial service might sooth consciences troubled by abortion guilt. The appearance of *mizuko kuyo* in Wolf's article seems a sign of desperation within pro-choice ranks. Most Americans, whatever their view of abortion, have been shaped by a notion of developing human life as unique and unrepeatable. Even if a Westernized memorial service shed the original Buddhist trappings, few participants could consciously embrace two colliding positions: the acknowledgment of abortion as the killing of an unborn child, and the decision to abort one's own child.

In Japan, the landscape is quite different. The nation's guiding ethical principles remain largely situational, and almost infinitely pliable, tranquilizing the conscience while providing an easy target for political manipulation. The weakness of organized religion has permitted a hodge-podge system of morality and ritual to establish itself, one that provides a primitive form of consolation despite its internal contradictions.

Joan Frawley Desmond *is a writer and teacher who recently returned to the United States after four years in Japan.*

On International Government. Nobody can be a citizen of the world as he is the citizen of his country. . . . The very notion of one sovereign force ruling the whole earth, holding the monopoly of all means of violence, unchecked and uncontrolled by other sovereign powers, is not only a forbidding nightmare of tyranny, it would be the end of all political life as we know it. Political concepts are based on plurality, diversity, and mutual limitations. A citizen is by definition a citizen among citizens of a country among countries. . . . Philosophy may conceive of the earth as the homeland of mankind and of one unwritten law, eternal and valid for all. Politics deals with men, nationals of many countries and heirs to many pasts; its laws are the positively established fences which hedge in, protect, and limit the space in which freedom is not a concept, but a living, political reality. The establishment of one sovereign world state, far from being the prerequisite for world citizenship, would be the end of all citizenship.

—Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (1968)

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Not So Christian America

Thomas C. Reeves

In 1988, the highly respected Gallup Organization reported that nine Americans in ten said they never doubted the existence of God, eight in ten said they believed they will be called before God on Judgment day to answer for their sins, eight in ten believed that God still works miracles, and seven in ten believed in life after death. Moreover, 90 percent prayed, 88 percent believed that God loved them, 78 percent said they had given "a lot" or "a fair amount" of thought to their relationship with God during the past two years, and 86 percent said they wanted religious training for their children.

Natural law? Seventy-nine percent believed that "there are clear guidelines about what's good and evil that apply to everyone regardless of the situation." Traditional moral standards? Gallup found 36 percent were conservative on the subject, 52 percent moderate, and only 11 percent liberal.

A whopping 84 percent said that Jesus was God or the Son of God, about three-quarters had at some time or other sensed Jesus' presence in their lives, and 66 percent reported having made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Even 72 percent of the unchurched said they believed that Jesus was God or the Son of God, up from 64 percent in 1978. Almost half of all Protestants described themselves as born-again Christians.

How can that much faith exist in a secular society? If 84 percent of its people believe that Jesus Christ was what he said he was, doesn't that by definition qualify the United States as a Christian country? Gallup concluded that "the degree of religious orthodoxy found among Americans is simply amazing. . . . Such a nation cannot by any stretch of the imagination be described as secular in its core beliefs."

A mere 8 percent of Americans were without a religious preference, and even they, in the words of Gallup, "express a surprising degree of interest in religion and religious belief." (That figure was reconfirmed in a 1994 Gallup poll.) In one survey, 69 percent of blacks and 61 percent of all Americans expressed a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in organized religion. Baby boomers, while less involved in religion than other Americans, were more likely than others to report that they were more interested in religion than they were five years earlier.

In 1990, a poll of 113,000 people around the nation commissioned by the Graduate School of the City University of New York found that only 7.5 percent of those surveyed said they had no religion, while 86.5 percent of Americans were Christians. Jews, with 1.8 percent, were the largest non-Christian faith. (Gallup polls described Jews as highly secular. Only 30 percent called religion "very important" and only one in five attended synagogue in the week before being interviewed.)

Gallup polls taken in 1991 showed a modest rise in religiousness in America over the previous three years. Christians were 82 percent of the adult population. (This figure held steady three years later, with 58 percent of the population being Protestant and 25 percent being Catholic.) About seven out of ten adults reported membership in a church or synagogue (a level reached in the 1970s that remained the same in 1994). Eighty-six percent of teens said they believed that Jesus Christ is God or the Son of God, and 73 percent considered regular church attendance an important aspect of American citizenship. Fifty-nine percent of interviewees said they agreed completely that a personal faith in Jesus Christ was the *only* assurance of eternal life, and another 17 percent

THOMAS C. REEVES *is Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside and author of* A Question of Character: A Life of John F. Kennedy *(1991).* *This article is excerpted from* The Empty Church: The Suicide of Liberal Christianity, *published this month by Free Press, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.* *Copyright © 1996 by Thomas C. Reeves.*

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agreed "somewhat." Eighty-one percent believed the Bible to be the literal (32 percent) or inspired (49 percent) word of God.

In 1992, the sociologists Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, following a careful analysis of data collected by the Bureau of Census and others, concluded that on the eve of the American Revolution only about 17 percent of Americans belonged to churches. By the start of the Civil War the figure was 37 percent, by 1906 it was slightly more than half, and in 1926 this had increased to 56 percent. The numbers continued to rise until by 1980 church adherence was about 62 percent. In short, America appeared to be more religious in the year Ronald Reagan was elected President than in the days of the Founding Fathers.

In a 1992 poll by the Barna Research Group, 79 percent of those aged forty-six to sixty-four said that religion was "very important to me," a statement concurred in by 65 percent of those twenty-seven to forty-five, and 54 percent of those eighteen to twenty-six. When asked whether they agreed that the Bible is the "totally accurate" word of God, 80 percent of those forty-six to sixty-four years old said yes, and so did 73 percent of those twenty-seven to forty-five, and 65 percent who were eighteen to twenty-six.

The Catholic sociologist Andrew Greeley, after announcing similar data in 1993 from an international study, declared, "In some countries, most notably Ireland and the United States, religious devotion may be higher than it has ever been in human history."

A 1994 *USA Today*/CNN/Gallup poll found that 70 percent belonged to a church or synagogue and that 66 percent attended services at least once a month. David Roozen of the Center for Social and Religious Research, Hartford Seminary, said that overall membership and attendance statistics "have remained stable over the last ten or fifteen years." The same poll showed that nine adults in ten believed in a heaven and that 79 percent believed in miracles.

Gallup reported that same year that 51 percent of the public said grace before meals either always or frequently, and that only 14 percent never did. Seventy-three percent of adults favored a constitutional amendment to allow voluntary prayer in the public schools. Sixty-two percent believed that religion could solve all or most of the day's problems, a figure that had remained steady for twenty years.

A Harris poll taken in July 1994 revealed that 95 percent of those surveyed believed in God and 90 percent believed in heaven. Of the four in five Americans who described themselves as Christians, 89 percent believed in life after death, 87 percent in miracles, and 85 percent in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Even 52 percent of the non-Christians surveyed expressed belief in the Resurrection!

A survey of 4,809 Americans released in September 1994 by the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press found that nine out of ten did not doubt the existence of God, almost eight out of ten said that prayer was an important part of their daily life, and almost nine of ten said they had "old-fashioned values about family and marriage."

A *New York Times*/CBS News poll in December 1994 found that 64 percent of adults believed that "organized prayer" should be permitted in the public schools. Six in ten public school students agreed. Gallup reported that American confidence in and support of organized religion reached a ten-year high mark in 1995. The index number had risen fifteen points since 1988.

Richard John Neuhaus has declared, "Statistically at least, America is as much a Christian nation as it ever was, and perhaps more so." He contends that "one of the most elementary facts about America is that its people are overwhelmingly Christian in their own understanding, and that they and many who are not Christian assume that the moral baseline of the society is the Judeo-Christian ethic."

A great many politicians certainly campaign as though they lived in a Christian country. In 1992, there were constant allusions to America as a religious nation with a special, divinely ordained "mission." All the major presidential candidates declared their personal commitment to the faith. George Bush told a convention of the National Religious Broadcasters, "I want to thank you for helping America, as Christ ordained, to be a light upon the world. . . . One cannot be America's President without a belief in God, without a belief in prayer." Bill Clinton, interviewed on an interdenominational religious cable network, declared, "If I didn't believe in God, if I weren't in my view . . . a Christian, if I didn't believe ultimately in the perfection of life after death, my life would have been that much more different." Ross Perot was a Presbyterian who backed traditional family values. Pat Buchanan, a Roman Catholic, advocated an America based on traditional Christian moral standards. Dan Quayle was the darling of the Religious Right. And so on.

And yet Billy Graham could declare that America was no longer a Christian or Protestant nation. It is, he said, "a secular country in which thousands of Christians live and have substantial influence." A prominent Roman Catholic theologian, Father Avery Dulles, was of the same mind, arguing that the country's moral breakdown was threatening democracy. In 1994, the Jewish medical educator David C. Stolinsky lamented the loss of the Christian values that dominated America in the 1950s. "The reason we fear to go out after dark is not that we may be set upon by bands of evangelicals and forced to read the New Testament, but that we may be set upon by gangs of feral young people who have been taught that nothing is superior to their own needs or feelings."

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Is modern America secular or Christian? We seem to be the most religious nation in the advanced industrialized West but at the same time appear to be blatantly, even aggressively, secular. Scholars, clergy, judges, journalists, and others have pondered the paradox for years.

In the first place, the polling data declare emphatically and unanimously that the United States continues to be a Christian nation—at least of a sort. The level of faith in the Christian gospel expressed by Americans is indeed, in Gallup's words, "simply amazing."

A truly secular society would have numbers approximating those found in, say, Great Britain, France, or Scandinavia, where interest in God is minimal and church attendance is extremely low (about 2.2 percent in the Church of England on an average Sunday). The historian Alan D. Gilbert has defined a thoroughly secular culture as "one in which norms, values, and modes of interpreting reality, together with the symbols and rituals which express and reinforce them, have been emancipated entirely from assumptions of human dependence on supernatural agencies or influences." That is not a description of American culture—at any time.

When nine out of ten Americans tell pollsters they believe in "old-fashioned values about family and marriage," there is widespread agreement about what that means. Most people do not condone burglary, rape, or Nazism. Charles Manson, Charles Keating, and Aldrich Ames are not heroes. Not many condemn honesty, courage, or fidelity. Indeed, people yearn for Presidents, bosses, and spouses who have such qualities.

Still, the public tells pollsters (64 percent in 1991) that there are few moral absolutes. More people (43 percent) say they rely upon their personal experience instead of outside authorities when weighing issues of right and wrong. Only three persons in ten view Scripture as the ultimate authority in matters of truth. That this seems to contradict other polling data about faith and morals has not escaped the attention of the pollsters themselves, who talk about public ambiguity in distinguishing good from evil.

This ambiguity is in part a reflection of the individualism inherent in Protestantism and the Enlightenment. Americans, among many others, have long claimed the right to define truth as they see it. The uncertainty also reveals the genuine difficulty facing all of us in knowing exactly how to respond to complex issues in the modern world. The great principles by which we live do not always provide us with clear-cut commandments. The historian Jacques Barzun once exclaimed, "The great difficulty of the moral life is that our knowledge of right conduct, as embodied in the Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount, or the Analects of Confucius, is abstract—like the articles of a constitution." George Weigel has written, "The suggestion that Christian orthodoxy yields a single answer to virtually every contested issue of public policy is an offense, not simply against political common sense, but against Christian orthodoxy."

Abortion is the classic case. A CBS News poll taken in January 1995 showed that while 46 percent of the respondents said that abortion was the same thing as murder, half of those said it still was sometimes necessary. Two presidential families, the Reagans and the Bushes, were divided over the issue. Quarrels over economic redistribution, immigration, welfare, the legalization of drugs, gun control, capital punishment, human embryo research, and other issues are commonplace and inevitable.

And yet for all our disagreements, we are far from being moral idiots—without a past, bereft of authority, and compelled to reinvent basic truths as we go. Pre-Christian peoples, of course, had a strong sense of right and wrong. As the Lutheran theologian Carl E. Braaten has observed, "The idea of a law rooted in the nature of humanity and the world and discoverable by reason has been traced back to the 'dawn of conscience.'"

No civilization has been completely at bay about right and wrong. There have been differences about morality, to be sure, but they have not been total. For all of the rich diversity of detail, there is, and has always been, a vital framework written on human hearts and minds by the Creator. C. S. Lewis has written, "Think of a country where people were admired for running away from battle, or where a man felt proud of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a country where two and two made five. . . . Men have differed as to whether you should have one wife or four. But they have always agreed that you must not simply have any woman you liked."

The English sociologist David Martin has cited the International Values survey to conclude that "we are mostly agreed about good and bad." He observed, "People are, it seems, adamantly opposed to lying, stealing, cheating, coveting, killing, and dishonoring their parents." Imagine responses to the following questions, says Martin: "Grinding the faces of the poor, the widowed, and the fatherless is reprehensible/admirable? Drinking and driving is irresponsible/responsible? Causing a little child to stumble is perverse/life-enhancing? Taking your share of the chores is wicked/virtuous? Poking a sharp shard in another person's eye is revolting/entertaining?"

Martin notes that consistent moral relativism, in practice, is hard to find. In contemporary liberal circles, where tolerance and moral relativism are said to reign supreme, "you are continually confronted by a noble rage about the delinquent condition of the world. Here is little else but moral passion for purity: pure jokes, pure speech, pure earth, sky, and sea, pure food and pure bodies, even undiluted equality."

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Christian thinkers have long believed that the Law of Moses reinforced and clarified natural law, and that the Savior fulfilled it. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it, "The moral law finds its fullness and its unity in Christ. Jesus Christ is in person the way of perfection. He is the end of the law, for only he teaches and bestows the justice of God."

The existence of natural law is scriptural (although there is only a single reference to it in the New Testament and none in the Old Testament), and it has been official Roman Catholic teaching for many centuries. The Protestant reformers, with the possible exception of Zwingli, also endorsed natural law and its consummation in the gospel. Calvin wrote in his *Institutes,* "It is a fact that the law of God which we call the moral law is nothing else than a testimony of natural law and of that conscience which God has engraved upon the minds of men."

All major American reform movements have appealed to eternal truth to buttress their crusades. The civil rights movement is an obvious example. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his famous letter from Birmingham jail, wrote of "the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage" and contended "that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. . . . I would agree with St. Augustine that 'an unjust law is no law at all.'" The pro-life movement claims unequivocally that it is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition, arguing, as reformers do, that what may be legal can still be immoral.

When 79 percent of the American people declare faith in clear guidelines about what is right and wrong, they are expressing a commitment to what Neuhaus calls a "moral baseline" long accepted in our culture and elsewhere. A majority of Americans understand, at least in general, what is expected of them by a power beyond their own wills. They know, for example, that personal integrity, being generous to the poor, and honoring marriage vows are virtues that do not go out of style. (The University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center found in 1992 that 91 percent of the American people think extramarital affairs are bad and that the overwhelming percentage of married people remain faithful.) In 1994, the social scientist Robert Wuthnow published a study in which he asked two thousand working Americans what was "absolutely essential" or "very important" to their basic sense of worth as a person. "Your family" ranked first, followed immediately by "Your moral standards." Ninety-seven percent of weekly churchgoers and 93 percent of the total labor force endorsed this choice.

Simply labeling America Christian, however, is inadequate. We must ask what sort of Christianity lives in the hearts and minds of most Americans in the late 1990s. It is clearly something unlike the faith practiced by third-century hermits, St. Francis of Assisi, or Martin Luther. Christianity has always absorbed elements of the culture of its adherents, and it is important to consider how extensively the classic faith has been altered by a modern, literate, prosperous, technologically driven society undeniably absorbed with obtaining prosperity, security, and pleasure. In short, what is the content of our Christianity?

First, our faith is not inextricably tied to our churches. Polls show that a majority of Americans have confidence in organized religion. But in 1988, according to Gallup, 44 percent of Americans were unchurched (people who said they were not members of any church or had not attended services in the previous six months other than for special religious holidays, weddings, funerals, or the like.) That figure amounted to about seventy-eight million adults. Gallup found that overwhelming majorities, churched and unchurched, agreed that people "should arrive at their religious beliefs independent of any church or synagogue" and that one can be a good Christian or Jew without attending a church or synagogue. Gallup discovered in polls taken in 1992 and 1995 that confidence in the clergy was at 54 percent of the populace, down from 67 percent in 1985.

When asked why they attended church less often, very few of those interviewed gave reasons that reflected a deep animosity toward organized religion. Only 8 percent said they disagreed with policies and teachings. A mere 5 percent said they were atheists or agnostics. For many, going to church just did not seem that important. Leading the list were 34 percent who said they were too busy.

Religious individualism seems to be at the core of American Christianity. This is a characteristic in harmony with our historic sense of personal independence as well as the considerable socioeconomic mobility we have long enjoyed. Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney concluded, "Typically Americans view religious congregations as gatherings of individuals who have chosen to be together, in institutions of their own making and over which they hold control—fostering what sometimes, in the eyes of observers from other countries, appears as 'churchless Christianity.'" For Americans, "religious authority lies in the believer—not in the church, not in the Bible, despite occasional claims of infallibility and inerrancy on the part of some."

This is true of modern American Roman Catholics as well. The massive changes made since Vatican II, consistently celebrated by liberal Catholics, have had unintended results. Gallup reported that 77 percent said they relied on their consciences rather than papal teaching in making difficult moral decisions. Polls show Catholics lending strong support for legal abortion, artificial birth control (they are more likely than Protestants to be childless), "safe sex" education in schools, and the ordination of women, all positions officially opposed by their church.

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According to Gallup, Catholic church attendance (people saying they had gone to church in the past seven days) fell from 74 percent in 1958 to an all-time low of 48 percent in 1988. A study published in 1994 by the University of Notre Dame sociologists Mark Chaves and James C. Cavendish found that the national average was a mere 26.7 percent.

Some, including Humphrey Taylor, president of the Louis Harris poll, now think that all church attendance figures reported by pollsters have been exaggerated. In 1993, Gallup found that 41 percent of Americans went to church within the last week. That figure had remained consistent for over a decade. But to some there just did not seem to be that many people in church on Sunday.

In 1993, a much publicized and controversial study conducted by the sociologists Mark Chaves and Kirk Hadaway and the religion professor Penny Long Marler concluded that only 19.6 percent of Protestants and 28 percent of Catholics were in church in any given week. Only about 16 percent of self-defined Episcopalians attended worship during a typical week. The researchers challenged the many telephone surveys conducted by Gallup and other pollsters, and suggested that Americans felt a need to appear more religious, and more respectable, than they really were.

The widely noted Catholic sociologist Andrew Greeley called the study "a sloppy piece of work," and others were also critical. The research was conducted among Protestants in a single rural Ohio county and among Catholics in only eighteen dioceses. But in any case the study again pointed to the chasm between the professed faith of the American people and their ambivalence about churches. Ironically, it also bolstered the belief that America remained a Christian society, for if the nation were truly secular, why would millions feel compelled to lie in this way to pollsters about church attendance?

Christianity in modern America also tends to be superficial. For one thing, its adherents are poorly educated in the faith. Gallup refers to "a nation of biblical illiterates" and presents solid evidence: only four in ten Americans know that Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount; fewer than half of all adults can name the four Gospels of the New Testament; only three in ten teenagers know why Easter is celebrated. "More than half of all Americans read the Bible less than once a month," Gallup reports, "including 24 percent who say they never read it and 6 percent who can't recall the last time they read the Bible."

Of course, given the fervently secular nature of the media and education at all levels, this illiteracy should not be surprising. It will no doubt increase. The young people who leave the mainline churches in droves are surely no exceptions. If Sunday Schools are teaching about condoms and poverty in Rwanda, there is little time for things like Scripture and church history. And if the clergy present the faith merely as a branch of anthropology or social work, there is little need for anyone to be informed.

A study by the Search Institute of Minneapolis in 1990 revealed that large majorities of mainliners did not read the Bible when alone. The Presbyterians headed the list (77 percent), followed by the Lutherans (75 percent), the United Church of Christ (68 percent), the United Methodists (65 percent), and the Disciples of Christ (62 percent).

According to Gallup, only slightly more than half of the Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians believe in the devil, while roughly the same numbers accept ESP. Fifty-six percent of the Lutherans and 49 percent of the Methodists believe in UFOs. A third of the Methodists and 31 percent of the Presbyterians believe in astrology. While 73 percent of the American people believe in hell, 77 percent believe their own prospects for going to heaven are excellent or good.

An in-depth random survey of 4,001 Americans, conducted by a team of political scientists and published in 1993, concluded that 30 percent of Americans are totally secular in outlook, 29 percent are barely or nominally religious, 22 percent are modestly religious, and only 19 percent—about thirty-six million people—regularly practice their religion. In measuring mainline Protestants (16.7 percent of those studied), for example, the researchers considered church attendance, membership, personal prayer, belief in life after death, and how "important" respondents said religion was in their lives. Those who registered some activity in all five categories were considered "committed" and qualified as part of the 19 percent. "We're not talking about Mother Teresas," said the political scientist John C. Green. "We're looking at people who meet a religious minimum according to their own traditions." In short, if this study is accurate, the vibrant faith pollsters hear about during their telephone interviews is exaggerated and not vitally linked with much of the public's attitudes and actions.

The superficiality of the Christianity expressed by a large majority of Americans can also be seen, of course, in the destructive behavior that increasingly mars our daily lives. Pious rhetoric is not necessarily an indication of a deep-seated, life-changing commitment.

Consider the violence, the insensitivity, and the staggering vulgarity we encounter—and enjoy—in the media. In 1990, 2.9 million couples lived together without marriage—up 80 percent from 1980 and 454 percent from 1970. There are 1.5 million abortions a year, and abortion is a $450 million a year business. Venereal diseases are rampant. African Americans are killing each other, going to prison, and succumbing to an assortment of addictions in record numbers. "American blacks are, by some measure,"

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Gallup reports, "the most religious people in the world." Drug abuse among teenagers was reported in 1995 to be still on the rise. Between 1992 and 1995, the proportion of eighth graders using illicit drugs almost doubled; among tenth graders it jumped by nearly two-thirds; among seniors it escalated by nearly half. "We have become," said William Bennett, "the kind of society that civilized countries used to send missionaries to."

Then, too, there are priorities. It is one thing to tell a pollster, perhaps in complete sincerity, that family and personal moral values are our chief concerns. But most of us, it seems clear, expend the great bulk of our time and energies fulfilling the American dream. We are consumed by our jobs, as psychiatrists, divorce lawyers, and millions of latchkey children know all too well, and are locked into an endless pursuit of the power, cash, status, and pleasure that promise "personal fulfillment" and happiness. Probably few clergy address this issue (there is the budget to meet and the new parish hall to be built), and, as Robert Wuthnow puts it, "we therefore go about our lives pretty much the same as those who have no faith at all."

At the same time we are slaving away to obtain the "finer" things in life, we publicly profess a strong distaste for materialism. We are able, following a long tradition in Western civilization, to divide the spiritual from the material realms of existence. The dichotomy makes us somewhat uneasy, but we persist nonetheless.

People who do not know who gave the Sermon on the Mount may not have read about the rich man and the eye of the needle. More than likely they do know about the warning and have chosen either to ignore it or explain it away—an endeavor long perfected by the wealthy and their minions. In any case, earthly comfort and security, Scripture tells us, are perilous goals for Christians.

Christianity in modern America is, in large part, innocuous. It tends to be easy, upbeat, convenient, and compatible. It does not require self-sacrifice, discipline, humility, an otherworldly outlook, a zeal for souls, a fear as well as love of God. There is little guilt and no punishment, and the payoff in heaven is virtually certain.

The faith has been overwhelmed by the culture, producing what is rightly called cultural Christianity. This is not a question of mere influence; acculturation takes place at all times and in all places. Christianity becomes cultural Christianity when the faith is dominated by a culture to the point that it loses much or most of its authenticity.

What we now have might best be labeled consumer Christianity. The psychologist Paul C. Vitz has observed, "The 'divine right' of the consumer to choose as he or she pleases has become so common an idea that it operates in millions of Americans like an unconscious tropism." Millions of Americans today feel free to buy as much of the full Christian faith as seems desirable. The cost is low and customer satisfaction seems guaranteed.

America is not—not yet, anyway—a thoroughly secular society. But its Christianity, in large part, has been watered down and is at ease with basic secular premises about personal conduct and the meaning of life. Such a religion has an uncertain future, for it has absorbed ideas and attitudes that may well lead to its demise. Authentic Christianity and the world are by definition at odds. That was decreed repeatedly and unequivocally by the Founder. The "disciple whom Jesus loved" made the truth crystal clear when he wrote: "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. . . . We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one."

There are still millions of Christians in this country, in many denominations, who cling to the scriptural and traditional faith and the morality that comes with it. They may ingest more than a bit of the worst parts of their culture; it is virtually impossible not to. But their primary allegiance is to the supernatural and living faith embraced by orthodox Christians for almost two thousand years.

In our time, a great many such people are worried and angry about the secularism, violence, cynicism, and despair they see welling up about them. One Wisconsin evangelical exclaimed in 1994, "The once-unthinkable is now almost commonplace, and we feel as though we are riding on a wagon out of control, careening down a hill. It is no progress to continue on the wrong path which our culture has already traveled so far." The evidence strongly suggests that the simile is on target. How we got into that wagon and began our wild ride downhill requires much attention. FI

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Choosing Abundance

John P. Sisk

The late avant-garde composer John Cage once urged as a basic principle that we "choose abundance rather than scarcity. Be wasteful, rather than pinchpenny. Get as much as you can out of all there is to be had. Have it even if you don't use it, or even if you use it badly as a gadget." Strange words indeed, now that the closing of our millennium has concentrated our attention on the deterioration of the environment and overcrowding in conditions of an increasing scarcity of vital materials. Nagged at by WorldWatch, we are more likely to heed the words of Carl Sagan: given our sorry world, we may ultimately face the choice of going the way of the dinosaurs or moving elsewhere in the cosmos to start over.

It helps to remember that Cage made these remarks in the spring of 1969, in the heyday of the Aquarian counterculture of the sixties when it was widely believed that an abundant life demanded hostility to the pinchpenny establishment and that there would always be experts like Buckminster Fuller to show us how to do more with less, so that everybody on Spaceship Earth could have more of everything. People going with the flow in those days were no more inclined to see a threat for humans in the fate of the dinosaur than to worry about the population explosion. In fact, Fuller believed that "Everyone in the world could be on Long Island and it would be less crowded than a cocktail party." He was no more likely than Cage to build his life around Benjamin Franklin's pinchpenny advice that "Spare and have is better than spend and crave."

Those who were college professors in those countercultural times might remember that their students, had they been polled, were much more likely to have chosen Cage's abundance than Franklin's pinchpenny. But those half million young people gathered at Woodstock in the summer of 1969 were in no mood for the distracting eccentricities and baffling silences of Cage's kind of music. One of his most famous compositions, for instance, required the audience to endure four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence from the performers. Such a stillness at Woodstock would have suggested not a rarer kind of abundance but a niggardly incapacity to apprehend the releasing spirit of the occasion.

Americans, of course, have always been conspicuous choosers and disposers of abundance, and by the same token, as Thorstein Veblen famously complained nearly a century ago, conspicuous and wasteful consumers. But they have been no less conspicuous in their complaint that the experience of abundance, like the experience of art and advertising, has a frustrating tendency to fall short of its promise. You can spend your spare time with Shakespeare and Beethoven, live in a Trump-type Tower, have as many shirts as Jay Gatsby, ride about in a chauffeured limousine, dine with movie stars, and still feel that something you are entitled to is being withheld. In the midst of plenty you can be tauntingly reminded, as Andrew Carnegie once was, of "how sweet and happy and pure the home of honest poverty is."

But no less noteworthy is the resilience of the American spirit as it rebounds from the repeated experience of having been misled by the promise of abundance. For the ever wistful rebounders there is now, for instance, the Church of Scientology, with its promise of the enduring enrichment of the self by way of the dominance of the analytic mind over the reactive mind. The goddess Sophia is enrichingly available to women as a counterforce to the patriarchal and pinchpenny God. For both sexes there is Terence McKenna's promise of an "Archaic Revival" in which human consciousness and the world will be psychedelically transformed by way of the magic mushrooms McKenna discovered in the rain forests of

JOHN P. SISK *is Professor of English Emeritus at Gonzaga University and author of Being Elsewhere.*

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the Amazon. His *True Hallucinations* might even lead one to suspect that McKenna could find a place in his psychedelic utopia for a hedonist like Shakespeare's Falstaff, provided the latter could tolerate the substitution of mushrooms for his beloved sack wine.

For McKenna the coming psychedelic millennium must be distinguished from the capitalist culture whose idea of abundance, as he sees it, is not a breakthrough to a higher consciousness but the easy and quick accumulation of material goods. In fact, he is in the counterculture tradition with those Americans who between the two world wars, their higher consciousness having been inspired not by golden mushrooms but by Karl Marx as filtered through the minds of Lenin and Stalin, wanted as quickly as possible a lasting abundance for everyone.

Indeed, choosers of abundance in America have usually assumed, however naively, that the natural consequence of wealth will be a refined consciousness and an appreciation of the finer things of life. This is the way it was with the Alger hero, who went from rags to riches not because he ate golden mushrooms but because he had character. And certainly we do an injustice to Cage if we assume that for him the only and best abundance is material well-being. We have to give him credit for knowing that in a society in which everyone put money first, his kind of music would be ruled out as a peace-disturbing and profitless racket that no one could dance to.

This is not to say, however, that Cage and his appreciators are on the side of character. They are too committed to the flexible and protean, too dependent on the possibilities of random discovery. The society that values the man of character has a pinch-penny attachment to the past and refuses to let Beethoven and Brahms go so that Cage's musical counterculture with all its promise of a higher consciousness can happen. The notion that such "higher consciousness" might never arrive—that Cage's musical experiments were merely more of the rubble from the collapsed edifice of character—seems never to have occurred to his supporters.

As Josiah Fisk presents him in the Autumn 1994 *Hudson Review*, Cage was an influential figure in "the new simplicity" in music, a movement that tends to leave us "blissfully ignorant of the dialogues, the ambiguities, the deeply questioning and even subversive powers that actually govern the operation of music." But Cage's kind of simplification is what José Ortega y Gasset was writing about between the world wars in *Man and Crisis* at a time when Europe as well as America was experiencing the events that turned out be prologue to the coming counterculture of the sixties. What struck Ortega as he compared the Renaissance of the fifteenth century to our own time was "simplification in the face of desperation, in the face of feeling lost in an excessive richness of life." In this situation, threatened by the disorienting complications of abundance, we can be pushed automatically "into dreaming of the life of the past, archaic, early, and primitive" or into some passionate and clarifying reduction of the bewildering complexity of life. The result, as Ortega put it, is that extremism becomes a form of life.

Of course, the extremism that reacts against unmanageable abundance ends up increasing the abundance of available orientations out of which further choices must be made. If those choices are themselves extreme, the choosers have the support of society's conviction that extreme situations demand extreme solutions. Besides, in a world of scarcity, extremism makes a nice alternative to the boredom that a lack of abundance imposes. The persistence of the myth of an irresistible and salvational avant-garde impulse depends, in fact, on the belief that where boredom reigns there can be no abundance to choose, and bourgeois values will stifle all creative effort, whether in art or politics.

Extremists, as is everywhere apparent these days, easily qualify as visionaries. Appropriately enough, in 1995, the *Utne Reader* featured one hundred visionaries "Who Could Change Your Life." Here again we get Ortega's image of extremist abundance in the face of bewildering complexity: this in spite of the fact that a minority (Václav Havel, Richard John Neuhaus, and Pico Iyer, for instance) are on Ortega's side and would no more expect a healthy cultural diet from such a smorgasbord of visionaries than they would expect to find temperance pamphlets being handed out at a rock concert.

Ortega's extremist commits himself to a feverish affirmation of his corner of reality and denies himself the rest. The problem, of course, is that any solution the disoriented and despairing choose in times of crisis will be to some extent an extremist simplification relative to the bewildering abundance of life in which they must find their reorientation. Thus St. Paul in Ortega's perspective is no less an extremist than a licentious wonder-working visionary like Simon Magus (he claimed he could fly), who may have been stimulated by St. Paul to become more extreme than he had been. So Christianity, as if to counter the objection that it is only one feverishly guarded corner of reality among many, has always managed to expand and clarify its being in the world through the act of contending with the simplifying extremisms of the heresies it inspires. Understandably, the frequent recurrence of such unexpected consequences in the secular world as well encourages the pathological fear of all extremisms (not including its own) that marks postmodern skepticism and helps to make what Robert J. Lifton called "Protean Man" look like an indispensable culture hero.

Lifton is on the *Utne* list, but Cage and Buckminster Fuller, being dead, are not, however they may be there in spirit. Absent too is that countercultural guru, Timothy Leary, who announced before his

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recent death that his head would be removed from his corpse and frozen in liquid nitrogen so that it might later be defrosted and attached to a cloned or mechanically produced body. More interestingly absent in the flesh but present in spirit is the French-Romanian visionary E. M. Cioran, whom some have called a Gnostic philosopher (though he confesses—see the interview with him in the Summer 1994 *Samagundi*—to have lost faith in philosophy).

For Cioran, Gnosticism must rank among the most extreme of extremisms, grounded as it is on the dogma that in the beginning "something unspeakable must have happened." What happened was that the evil Demiurge, whose antithesis is the impotent Good God and whose delegate is the Devil, took over the world, leaving us strangers within it and alienated from that true abundance of being that would otherwise have been our birthright. Since the world of material reality, time, and history is the domain of the Demiurge and his Arcons, to choose abundance in the expectation of a final escape from privation is simply to reinforce our bondage to the Demiurge.

The attempt to escape boredom, especially in our materially abundant and technologically bedazzling culture, has the same effect. Boredom, Cioran says, is connected naturally with the experience and consciousness of time. But in the Gnostic view the extremist reactions from the disorienting complexities of our condition are only the means the Demiurge employs to enlarge his domain in which the entertainments of abundance beguilingly promise a triumph over matter and time.

The Cages and the Falstaffs of the world are least likely to know this, but true-believing Gnostics, an avant-garde elite if there ever was one, have always known it and have always known too how to move into and stake out claims in Christian and Jewish territory. (Harold Bloom in *The American Religion* has argued that Gnosticism is entrenched in American Protestantism as well as in Emersonian transcendentalism.) The true Gnostic, knowing the wiles of the Demiurge, is not about to be taken in by the pseudo-Gnostic promise of a new consciousness by way of McKenna's golden mushrooms. How like the subtle Demiurge to have planted them in the Amazonian rain forest, knowing that when in due time they were found they might, thanks to the naiveté of the eaters, contribute to the prevailing complexity and confusion in the world, and thus insure the continuing force of that initial unspeakable happening.

The Demiurge apparently is a sadist whose greatest pleasure is to torment humans with images of unrealizable earthly abundance. It is also his perverse pleasure to encourage the aesthetic impulse thanks to which humans are able to tantalize themselves with delusive images of their own creation. True Gnostics with their avant-garde knowledge know all this just as they know all about those avid and gullible others to whom the Demiurge's aesthetic images guarantee abundance without end if they are bold and clever enough to seize it.

Here one may wonder about Cioran himself. Is he, as he sometimes seems to be, a true-believing Gnostic or is he only one of those who see no alternative to Gnosticism's ontology and cosmology but waver at its theology? In the *Salmagundi* interview he confesses to having known early on "that I did *not* have faith and I also knew that I would *never* have it." Religious faith seems such a distorter of experience, such an encourager of illusion, that polytheistic paganism's admission of many divine stories seems better than monotheistic Christianity's insistence on a single story. Faith, he says in *The New Gods*, is a Christian invention, hence its aggressive and frantic nature. The old religion was more human, more tolerant of shifts from one god to another, and less likely to breed fiercely embattled heresies. Yet there is something like faith in his fascination with the Gnostic picture of things as they are, always have been, and always will be. His belief that "we live in a period of absurd and completely unnecessary overproduction" suggests the Gnostic's categorical abhorrence of material reality—especially when we remember that in his earlier *The Fall Into Time* civilization itself was judged to be the work of the Devil.

But at the same time, he says, "To live without music would be a torment to me, an absurdity," which a true-believing Gnostic could take as a sign that the Demiurge still has him in thrall. Schumann and Bach make the music he likes; Bach, in fact, is a god to him. It is just as safe to say that he would no more enjoy Cage's chance-determined and silence-fractured harmonies than he would trust any abundance that Cage might choose for him.

By the same token, we can no more imagine Cioran eating McKenna's magic mushrooms than sharing the latter's enthusiasm for the "ambient music" of the international youth culture—which might only drive him to one of his meditations on suicide that he has found to be "almost as liberating as the act itself." Perhaps we must locate him somewhere among those waverers who have found a viable position between agnosticism and downright disbelief from which no visionary is likely to move them.

If a quarter of a century ago Cage had been able to foresee the cultural impact of the computer he might have seen it as further reason to hope that abundance when boldly chosen could be manageable, and certainly no reason to expect that Ortega's extremism with its disorienting complications would continue apace. On the other hand, a true-believing Gnostic, oriented to a transcendental state of being, would have to see the computer as the means the Demiurge uses to imprison humans more securely in the world of time and matter in which the rigged environment frustrates any attempt at transcendental relief. Indeed, one might imagine the Demiurge's definition

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of hell as a place where the inmates are condemned to playing the same Nintendo game forever, knowing before each play that they are doomed to suffer once more the reversal of the expectation that they *might* win.

I suspect that Ortega would have realized that in a world marked by the proliferation of extremist simplifications, something like the computer was inevitable. How else to keep from being swamped by information generated as the simplifications compete or attempt to accommodate themselves to one another? Perhaps too he would have foreseen that such an instrument would often enough have the effect of one more simplification and so aggravate the condition it was expected to alleviate. Would not the record of society's past experience with advances in the transmission of information have led him to expect that the faster a mere mortal travels the abundantly informed infobahn, the sooner he will arrive at the crossroads, detours, and turnoffs that invalidate the map that led him to them, and so be tempted to an enervating postmodern skepticism about the reliability of any map? Might Ortega not have foreseen too that such a New Age as ours would be especially vulnerable to the Gnostics' simplifying temptation to assign the mess of the world to the Demiurge and so end up tormented with a babble of visionary voices?

Not all the *Utne* visionaries are so pessimistic. Starbuck, the goddess-infused San Francisco Reclaimer, believes that "We have the technology to live in harmony with the earth, and I'm glad we do. I don't want to give up my computer." As for McKenna, his mushroom-generated Archaic Revival might seem to need computers the way Newcastle needs coal. Nevertheless, he states that "For me a balanced intellectual life is a life of immersion in high technology pursued in a nurturing and remote natural environment." A confirmed Gnostic would recognize in these words that the Demiurge, having seduced McKenna into a categorical choice for abundance, still had the situation well in hand.

But as Hans Jonas reminds us in his classic *The Gnostic Religion*, the true-believing Gnostic also had choices. He could categorically choose the way of antinomian libertinism (as did the Valentinians), in which case the pneumatic self acted as if it had "a positive injunction to perform every kind of action, with the idea of rendering to nature its own and thereby exhausting its powers." So the Valentinians chose an abundance of sin, all injunctions against sinning being the means the Demiurge uses to enslave them in the time-bound material world. To sin vigorously, then, could be a way to cancel their estrangement from the Good God.

Anarchic libertinism was thus the extremist opposite to that other and no less extremist way of despising the world that Gnostic asceticism was. This ascetic way quite logically took a dim view of sex and marriage, which could only increase the population of the Demiurge's domain. Paradoxically, like today's compulsive dieters and exercise buffs, the ascetics chose the scarcity of self-denial in the interest of an eventual abundance of being. In making their choice they had as much reason as the libertines did to believe they were acting on the sanction of an infallible avant-garde. Cioran seems to be on their side with his belief that "there is no freedom, no 'real life' without an apprenticeship in dispossession." Here, of course, he might seem to be endorsing the true-believing Christian's association of the "real life" of Easter with the dispossessing apprenticeship of Lent. But the crucial difference is that for Cioran what is dispossessed is not worth possessing in any context: his Lent is apparently without end. He would surely find nothing to admire in Carnegie's sweet home of honest poverty.

The libertine and ascetic Gnostics strike us as being incompatible heretics, however in the act of day-by-day living each may have slipped into the other's territory. They lacked the American ingenuity to combine the two impulses that we can see in New York's Eulenspiegel Society and in similar modishly appointed temples of the sadomasochistic erotic underground. In such places, thanks to professional guides and an abundance of paddles, blindfolds, whips, handcuffs, hot candle wax, restraining chains, and devices for electric shock, it is possible for the clientele to explore unsuspected dimensions of their humanity while positive life forces surge through them, pain meanwhile being carried strategically to the point where it ceases to be pleasure. One could see such highly organized assaults on boredom as parodies of the practices of cenobites in desert caves where, however, the rebellious ego and flesh were mortified, not pampered. True-believing ascetic Gnostics might see in such fraudulent sideshows the presence of faithless Valentinians in the act of providing more entertainment for the Demiurge.

It is not hard to see the result, in America and Western civilization generally, as the embattled simplicities of a life-affirming libertinism and a life-denying asceticism complicate all attempts to answer the question whether it is safer to choose abundance than scarcity. Indeed, one of the major attractions of utopia is its guarantee that the question will never come up. Understandably, many of our most compelling stories feature the painful fate of individuals so caught between the countering claims of these imperatives that, unlike the utopian Falstaff, they are incapable of an unambiguous choice. The ambiguity of their position is the one we find memorialized in St. Augustine's famous prayer: "Give me chastity and continence, but not just now."

In time, as we know, Augustine became an unam-

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biguous and unwavering Christian. Unwavering Christians are able to see their presence in the material, time-bound, but always spirit-haunted world as a testing assignment. They are in a position to see that there are times when to choose pinchpenny is to choose a state of dispossession in which the uncluttered mind and liberated soul have access to a true abundance, but without forgetting their dependence as human choosers on whatever abundance they are blessed with. And perhaps too, being more open to the mysteries of quotidian reality, they may be willing to concede the possibility that during Cage's four minutes and thirty-three seconds of enforced silence, some of those in his audience might themselves come to this conclusion. FT

Creation

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.
—Mary Oliver

Even on hot days the tall grass
keeps water in the veins and folds
of its body. Running, my legs are splashed
then sticky with spiders' webs
and the foamy nests of insects
who want the grassy water so much
they will build their homes among it.

Like the insects, I draw water
from the grass whose body is built to collect it.
For only water's flow through me
makes my running possible.
In return I name grass and spider;
I measure them into creation.

Some compare the prairie
to a heaven of yearning
beyond the covering sky—
I let visitors pass unnamed

for I will run here with my own.
Our dwelling awaits you, our names call out to you.
We think of you walking your planted field
and eating the fruit of its grain.
We wait here for your return,
when you will fill the place like water,
being everywhere in what you made,
and we'll see that Canaan is all creation,
that its names are ours and we've always been there,
only missing you.

Michael R. Jones

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Presbyterians Hold the Line

Terry Schlossberg

The future of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was scheduled to be decided at the 1996 General Assembly, held from June 30 to July 6 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. No assembly in recent decades had been able to settle the issue of homosexuality—the issue which, more than any other, threatened schism. Many feared that approval of the ordination of homosexuals by the General Assembly (the denomination's highest governing body) would lead orthodox Presbyterians to flee in unprecedented numbers, leaving little more than an empty shell for the pro-homosexual forces to claim.

The final vote, however, provides a hopeful sign the oldline denomination may be inching toward new life, as the commissioners voted to exclude practicing homosexuals from ordination. In a victory for local churches over their national leadership, the General Assembly required of its ordained leaders "fidelity within the covenant of marriage of a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness," and excluded the unrepentant from ordained office. If a majority of the denomination's presbyteries approve the amendment within the next year, the explicit requirement will be added to the church constitution.

Presbyterians on both sides had been organizing for months, even years, for the vote. The main pro-ordination group, Presbyterians for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (PLGC), has existed since the seventies. They were joined this year by a small but insistently public "More Light" Church Network. This group, which represents fewer than one hundred of the more than eleven thousand PC (USA) congregations, formalized its presence at the Assembly with an exhibit booth adjoining PLGC's. On the other side, the Presbyterian Coalition pulled together the forces working for the preservation of orthodoxy. Their efforts were bolstered by a group of presbytery executives called The Genevans. In the word of one observer, both sides elected their "warriors" to serve as commissioners this year.

Presbyterians came to the Assembly in record numbers—three times the usual number registered as observers—so that they could watch the proceedings first hand. In a firm but calm manner, Dr. Roberta Hestenes, President of Eastern College in Philadelphia, moderated the Committee on Ordination and Human Sexuality, which met in the convention center's ballroom in order to accommodate press and the huge number of observers.

The church's position on homosexual practice has been a sharp point of division between denominational leaders and the body of church members. Insisting that the Bible forbids the practice, the orthodox forces have repeatedly made their convictions known by various means, including formal polls. Using church members' tithes and offerings, the denominational offices have written and produced an enormous volume of materials in support of homosexuality, while several of its programs—the College Women's Network, a creation of the Women's Ministries office, for example—actually promote homosexual behavior. Even before debate opened in Albuquerque, the divisions were clear. The pro-gay sympathizers donned pink triangles, while the orthodox wore red hearts carrying First Peter's message of "purity, truth, and love."

The debate over the ordination of homosexuals is a clear window into the deep theological and ethical division between the national leadership and the people who occupy the pews. Since its beginning in 1983, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has suffered continuous demographic, financial, theological, and spiritual decline, as its radical leaders increasingly alienated its congregations. Many members—indeed, whole congregations—responded to the national leaders' leftist stances by leaving the

Terry Schlossberg *is Executive Director of Presbyterians Pro-Life.*

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denomination. In the past two years alone, the church lost 77,000 members; since 1983, fully half a million of the original three million members have gone. Inevitably, income into the national office's coffers has declined. Even remaining congregations have deliberately withheld or redirected their giving away from the higher governing bodies out of distrust and disapproval of the programs their contributions support.

Nevertheless, the leadership had its way with little effective resistance from the people in the pews until the RE-Imagining conference in November 1993. At that conference, planned and financed by mainline denominations, leaders advocated neopagan doctrines and led worship honoring the goddess Sophia. Orthodox groups and the independent newspaper *The Presbyterian Layman* alerted Presbyterians to the scandal of the RE-Imagining conference. The local churches sent overtures to the General Assembly, publicly denounced the conference, demanded the resignations of the staff responsible, and withheld their donations to the national offices. Denominational officials defended the conference and accused the independent press of false reporting, but the jig was up. In the end, Mary Ann Lundy, a church official who played a prominent role in organizing and obtaining church funds for the RE-Imagining conference, lost her job. This, and the 1994 General Assembly's promise that "Theology matters," seemed to restore the aggrieved congregations' trust in the leadership. But even while many churches were deciding to reinstate their donations, radical feminists within the denomination established the unofficial group, Voices of Sophia, to salvage what they could of the RE-Imagining debacle. And the ousted Ms. Lundy became deputy secretary general of the World Council of Churches.

With the battle over pagan worship still a fresh memory to both sides, the stage was set for the Albuquerque showdown over gay ordination. Most mainstream Presbyterians have little knowledge of the church's constitution or policy procedures. The typical church member views the church as a spiritual, not a political, body and rarely thinks of political action as a tool for church renewal. Many pastors believe that the pastoral needs of their flocks supersede concerns about the demise of the denomination and stopped attending denominational meetings long ago. Lay people elected to serve as commissioners at a General Assembly rarely do the duty more than once, while denominational staff members and elected officials attend the General Assembly in huge numbers every year. Uncertain first-time commissioners look to these Assembly veterans for professional advice. The staff's "Advice and Counsel" memoranda on important issues of the Assembly flow freely, and staff members serve as appointed "resource people" to Assembly committees. In committees dealing with controversial material, these "resource people" sometimes have complete freedom of the floor while other Presbyterians—who truly may be experts on a subject, but hold an alternative point of view—are restricted to the sidelines except for the two minutes they are allowed to speak in public hearings. When combined with control of the process in the committee and plenary sessions, these factors are usually enough to ensure that the national office achieves its goals at General Assemblies.

Take, for example, the Assembly's approval of the "Platform for Action" of the UN Conference on Women held last year in Beijing. The Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns wanted the Assembly to approve the Platform, sight unseen. When it was discovered that none of the committee members or resource people had actually read the document, a minority report from committee members who disapproved of adoption of the unread Beijing Platform became the motion on the floor of the General Assembly. Working quickly and well, however, the Assembly moderator headed off a motion for a vote, and called a recess. By the next day, someone who had read the document had been found, Assembly members had been lobbied, and the Platform was adopted after a brief debate.

But manipulation didn't work on every issue at the 1996 Assembly. All that commissioners seemed to need in order to vote on sexual standards for ordination was a clearly worded motion and a process reasonably free of confusion. Committee moderator Hestenes delivered both. In plenary as in committee sessions, commissioners debated the majority and minority reports in a media spotlight and before a convention hall packed with visitors—mostly pastors and church members from around the country. Following the vote, Hestenes told reporters that she believed "members of the church will be encouraged by the vote," and that she expected no large-scale defections.

Another occasion when commissioners asserted their own will at the General Assembly was in their refusal to confirm the reelection of James Brown, the Executive Director of the General Assembly Council, which directs the denomination's activities between Assemblies. Brown was at the center of many of the church's recent controversies including the RE-Imagining conference. Efforts to manipulate the confirmation process failed not just once, but twice. Committee members openly expressed feelings of being pressured into confirming Brown. After the first plenary vote failed to confirm his reelection, an attempt at reconsideration failed by a larger margin, and the man who occupied one of the most powerful positions in the denomination was out of a job.

Who can tell which of the General Assembly's actions indicate the direction the denomination is taking? In times of transition there are signs

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pointing in more than a single direction. There are those who believe that the resistance to Christian orthodoxy and commitment to a radical leftist agenda is so entrenched that the downward spiral of the Presbyterian Church cannot be reversed, and any appearance of change is only an illusion.

Others see the cause of orthodoxy steadily advancing and the recent Assembly's action on homosexual ordination a hopeful sign that the denomination, like a ship that has drifted drastically off course, is not just making a small deviation, but is actually turning. William Wilberforce, leader in the renewal of English society in the early nineteenth century, complained throughout his life of the deteriorating conditions of English society. Only from the vantage point of our own time can we see how much conditions were improving in England during Wilberforce's lifetime, due in no small measure to his own perseverance and leadership.

We too may have difficulty seeing improvements in the midst of what are very serious theological problems. It can take a long time to bring about a significant change of direction in a ship that has wandered so far off course. Doomsayers in our churches today have a tendency to give up and leave. Wilberforce did not fully understand the improvements that were taking place in his own time, but he never *behaved* as if the situation was deteriorating. He never lost hope and never gave up pressing for renewal. It is the presence or absence of those traits of character that is likely to tell the tale finally in the mainline Protestant church of our own day. FT

Faith and Hope

But having this hope for what we cannot yet see, we are able to wait for it with persevering confidence.

—Romans 8:25

As for Powell on the Colorado,
relaxed at the tiller, sextant laid aside,
the canyon assembling the web of rivers
downward for as long as it takes
to cut to the root of the world,

the flow of the empty place consoles us,
attention awakens as we're slipping
down river at night. It's our work to wait
in this motion, faithful, alert, downstream.

We know faith comes from waiting. We wait
and we do not believe, or we believe
by a word made—God knows how—of words.
Hearing, we know there is farther to go.

Where the river bends and stretches our hope,
there is nothing but motion: the current
which seems to follow the canyon is sextant
and tiller, making and mapping, always
unseen, even to the root of the world.

Michael R. Jones

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Christianity and Democracy

Fifteen years ago this month, in October 1981, the Washington-based Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) adopted the following statement, entitled "Christianity and Democracy." IRD had been launched that spring by a small group of evangelicals, Roman Catholics, and oldline Protestants who were concerned about the ambiguous witness of the churches on the cause of human freedom. At that time the Cold War was the dominant fact in international affairs and largely shaped domestic politics. Numerous Christian leaders and some churches associated with the National Council of Churches (NCC) advocated a "moral symmetry" between the Soviet Union and the United States, agitated for unilateral disarmament, and condemned anticommunism as a moral failing and even a theological heresy. In its declaration, written by Richard John Neuhaus, IRD intended to set forth the Christian case for, and stake in, the liberal democratic order. The IRD initiative occasioned enormous controversy at the time. While sympathetic treatment of the IRD argument by popular media such as 60 Minutes *and* Reader's Digest *provoked vigorous counterattacks against IRD by the officialdoms of oldline churches and the NCC, some historians date the precipitous decline of the public influence of liberal religion from this conflict. IRD, it should be noted, continues as a vibrant catalyst of renewal movements within oldline churches, especially the United Methodist, Presbyterian (U.S.A.), and Episcopal. We republish the original text of "Christianity and Democracy" because of its historical interest and because of its pertinence to the perennial struggle between the totalitarian impulse and the democratic alternative. (That the threat to democracy indeed continues, also in the U.S., is underscored by a sobering symposium coming in the November issue of* First Things *on the imperial judiciary and its usurpation of politics.)*

— The Editors

Jesus Christ is Lord. That is the first and final assertion Christians make about all of reality, including politics. Believers now assert by faith what one day will be manifest to the sight of all: every earthly sovereignty is subordinate to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ.

The Church, the community of believers, is the bearer of that claim. Because the Church is pledged to the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus, it must maintain a critical distance from all the kingdoms of the world, whether actual or proposed. Christians betray their Lord if, in theory or practice, they equate the Kingdom of God with any political, social, or economic order of this passing time. At best, such orders permit the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom and approximate, in small part, the freedom, peace, and justice for which we hope. At worst, such orders attempt to suppress the good news of the Kingdom and oppress human beings who are the object of divine love and promise.

The First Political Task of the Church

The first political task of the Church is to be the Church. That is, Christians must proclaim and demonstrate the Gospel to all people, embracing them in a sustaining community of faith and discipline under the Lordship of Christ. In obedience to this biblical mandate, Christians give urgent priority to all who are in need, especially the poor, the oppressed, the despised, and the marginal. The Church is called to be a community of diversity, including people of every race, nation, class, and political viewpoint. As a universal community, the

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Church witnesses to the limits of the national and ideological loyalties that divide mankind. Communal allegiance to Christ and his Kingdom is the indispensable check upon the pretensions of the modern state. Because Christ is Lord, Caesar is not Lord. By humbling all secular claims to sovereignty, the Church makes its most important political contribution by being, fully and unapologetically, the Church.

While our first allegiance is to the community of faith and its mission in the world, Christians do not withdraw from participation in other communities. To the contrary, we are called to be leaven and light in movements of cultural, political, and economic change. History is the arena in which Christians exercise their discipleship. Because our hope is eternal and transcendent, Christians can participate in society without despair or delusion. We do not despair of the meaning of history, nor do we delude ourselves that our efforts are to be equated with establishing the Kingdom of God. The fulfillment of history's travail is the promised Rule of God, not the establishment of our human programs and designs.

Towards an Open Church

God has given us no one pattern for the ordering of societies or of the world. For almost two millennia Christians have pursued their mission within a variety of social, political, and economic systems. Among Christians today, as in times past, there are significant disagreements. Today disagreements are especially sharp on how best to advance freedom, justice, and peace in the world. That Christians are to pursue these goals should be beyond dispute. Disagreements about how they are to be pursued need be neither surprising nor destructive. Also in making political decisions, we are all subject to error. With prayer, we decide in the courage of our uncertainties. We strive to credit the intelligence and good intentions of those who decide differently. Especially within the believing community we must, in the words of Reinhold Niebuhr, avoid portraying our conflicts as a war between "the children of light and the children of darkness." Our unity in Christ is greater than whatever may divide us.

Within our several churches disagreement about the meaning of social justice should not merely be tolerated; it should be cherished. We are pledged to the goal that our churches be open churches. An open church engages sympathetically the diversity of Christian views both within and outside denominational structures. An open church welcomes dissent for the strengthening of truth and the correction of error. An open church makes decisions in the light of day, not in the shadowed corners of bureaucratic power. An open church has leaders who are not afraid but eager to engage in the fullest consultation with all its members. An open church addresses social issues not so much to advance a particular position as to inform and empower people to make their own decisions responsibly. An open church understands that the church speaks most effectively when the people who are the church do the speaking, and leaders speak most believably when they speak with the informed consent of those whom they would lead. Sometimes leaders can and should disagree with the views of the majority. To disagree, however, is not to disregard the views of others. Leadership in an open church is marked by candor and never by contempt for the convictions of those with whom we differ. In these ways, an open church becomes a zone of truth-telling in a world of mendacity.

The Totalitarian Impulse

In this century of Hitler and Stalin and their lesser imitators the most urgent truth to be told about secular politics is the threat of totalitarianism. That truth was told eloquently by John Courtney Murray, whose understanding of religious and civil freedom was ratified by Vatican Council II. Many political theories of our time, Father Murray wrote, are marked by a "thoroughgoing monism, political, social, juridical, religious: there is only one Sovereign, one society, one law, one faith. And the cardinal denial is of the Christian dualism of powers, societies, and laws—spiritual and temporal, divine and human. Upon this denial follows the absorption of the community in the state, the absorption of the state in the party, and the assertion that the party-state is the supreme spiritual and moral, as well as political, authority."

The religious term for political monism or totalitarianism is idolatry. The party-state declares itself to be absolute, and therefore not accountable to any transcendent judgment. Regimes that subscribe to this dogma assert that they themselves embody the final meaning of history and are therefore not answerable to any higher authority or morality. Totalitarianism takes either leftist or rightist forms. Our century is shrouded by the specter of Hitler's Third Reich. Today, however, the only global ideology that is committed to the monistic denial of freedom is Marxism-Leninism. That this revolutionary movement denies what we understand by freedom is not a charge lodged by its critics but a tenet consistently proclaimed by the movement itself.

There are significant differences between Marxist-Leninist regimes. In some places their total control is partially checked by religious, cultural, ethnic, and economic forces which restlessly press toward freedom. In other places these forces have been ruthlessly destroyed, even at the price of genocide. The brutal denial of freedom by Communist states is not accidental. It is inherent in and essential to the doctrine by which such regimes would legitimate their power. Although the totalitarian intent is not actualized with the same consistency or brutality in every Marx-

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ist-Leninist regime, every such regime and every such revolutionary movement subscribes to the totalitarian intent. To the extent the intent has been actualized, millions have died, millions more have been imprisoned and cruelly repressed.

In addition to this unspeakable human suffering, however, we declare that the intent itself is evil. It is both politically and theologically imperative to assert that Marxism-Leninism promulgates a doctrine that is incompatible with a Christian understanding of humanity and historical destiny. Thus Christians must be unapologetically anti-Communist. Anti-Communism is not a sufficient political philosophy, but it is an indispensable component in discerning the signs of the times. Those who do not understand this have not recognized the bloody face of our age and, however benign their hopes, can contribute little toward the establishment of a more humane world.

The Democratic Alternative

An alternative to totalitarianism is democracy. There are different and sometimes confused theories about democratic governance. Indeed the idea of democracy is so attractive in our day that even totalitarian regimes attempt to claim it as their own. The understanding of democratic governance espoused here, however, is neither novel nor complicated. Democracy's marks are obvious to all who have eyes to see.

Democratic government is limited government. It is limited in the claims it makes and in the power it seeks to exercise. Democratic government understands itself to be accountable to values and to truths which transcend any regime or party. Thus in the United States of America we declare ours to be a nation "under God," which means, first of all, a nation under judgment. In addition, limited government means that a clear distinction is made between the state and the society. The state is not the whole of the society, but is one important actor in the society. Other institutions—notably the family, the church, educational, economic, and cultural enterprises—are at least equally important actors in the society. They do not exist or act by sufferance of the state. Rather, these spheres have their own peculiar sovereignty which must be respected by the state.

Democratic governance is pluralistic governance and thus the opposite of political monism. By protecting the roles of many institutional and individual actors within the social order, democracy keeps society open to the future. It resists the act of historical closure which is the consequence of the totalitarian impulse. Because it cherishes criticism and change, democracy is a progressive movement invoking the promise of the future. Totalitarianism, which would freeze and consolidate power relations, is essentially reactive and fearful. It represses diversity and dissent in a fearful denial of the human capacity for growth and the human need for criticism.

As democracy keeps society open to the future it also keeps the future open. That is, the democratic posture is not one of merely passive receptivity to whatever may happen. Rather, it is one of protecting and nurturing the individual and institutional visions of alternative futures. Democratic society is not a terminal enterprise. The intention is not that at some point in the near or distant future all questions will be answered and all conflicts resolved. The chief goal of democratic governance is to sustain the process of democratic governance. Toward that end, constitutional provisions do not provide all the answers to society's problems but protect the process by which various answers are debated and adopted, always subject to change. Democratic government is contingent, modest in its claims, and open-ended.

What we perceive as the virtues of democratic governance others condemn as its weakness. There is a deep human hunger for a monistic world, for authority, control, and definitive meaning which can cut through the ambiguities and uncertainties of our existence. From this hunger emerges the totalitarian impulse. This hunger is essentially religious in character and is dangerously misplaced when it seeks satisfaction in the politics of the present time. This hunger cannot and should not be satisfied short of the coming of the Kingdom of God. To mistake any existing or proposed social order for the Kingdom of God is the great crime against humanity.

We readily acknowledge that democratic governance is unsatisfactory. Everything short of the consummation of the rule of Christ is unsatisfactory. For Christians, it is precisely the merit of democracy that it reminds us of this truth and sustains the possibility of humane government in a necessarily unsatisfactory world. There are tensions and contradictions within democratic theory and practice. Especially problematic are relationships between the individual and the community, between formal process and substantive purpose, between popular participation and power elites. We do not deny these and other problems. Rather, believing that democratic theory and practice is still developing, we would encourage in the churches a lively examination of the problems and their possible resolutions. Such an examination only begins with the basic outline of democratic governance set forth in this statement and should be informed by the maxim framed by Reinhold Niebuhr: "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."

Democratic governance is based upon a morality of respect and fairness for all. It is responsive to the diverse moral judgments and meanings affirmed by individuals and institutions within society. It not only tolerates but rigorously protects those spheres within which people find meaning for their lives and share that meaning with others. Most importantly,

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democratic government does not seek to control or restrict the sphere of religion in which people affirm, exercise, and share their ultimate beliefs about the world and their place in it.

As democratic government does not seek to absorb the sphere of religion, so it does seek to respect the autonomy of cultural and economic life. With respect to the last, there is much debate about the relationship between democracy and capitalism. Whatever the economic achievements of capitalism, and they are considerable, our primary concern is to preserve and strengthen democracy. We believe that the personal and institutional ownership and control of property—always as stewards of God to whom the whole creation belongs—contributes greatly to freedom. We note as a matter of historical fact that democratic governance exists only where the free market plays a large part in a society's economy.

Like political democracy, a market economy is a process open to the future. The focus is on the production of wealth rather than on the consolidation and redistribution of existing goods. Experience in America and the world suggests that when a market economy is open to the participation of all, it works to the benefit of all, and especially of the poor. Conversely, we note that the economic systems advanced by totalitarian regimes have been consistently disastrous for all but the new class of the political elite. A market economy may be a necessary condition for democracy. It is obviously not a sufficient condition for democracy. There are more or less capitalist societies with repressive regimes quite unlike the democratic governance we affirm. In modern industrialized societies the state is necessarily involved in aspects of economic life. Apart from pragmatic considerations, however, our bias in favor of a market economy is informed by our commitment to democracy. To the extent that capitalism is a necessary restraint upon the monistic drives of society, it warrants our critical approval.

The formal structures of democratic governments may and do vary. Both in theory and historical experience, however, there would seem to be some universal requirements. These include some concept of the rule of law to which any regime of the moment is held accountable. That concept may be embodied in a constitution, in common law, in institutionalized tradition, or in a mix of all three. It also appears necessary that there be an institutionalized division of powers within the government itself. Thus, as society is not monolithic, so the state is not monolithic. Within democratic government there are processes of appeal, whether to the courts or to the parliament or to some other agency. While there must be, so to speak, an agency of last resort, its decisions too are subject to democratic change. In sum, the instruments of democratic government are internally limited, as is the government itself externally limited by virtue of being but one actor in society.

As we have seen, democratic governance respects the rights not only of individuals in society but of other institutional actors. Individuals and institutions must associate in order to press their interests in relation to the government and to other associations. Crucial to this process is the freedom to assemble, to speak, and to publish. What in our country is represented by the Bill of Rights is not only constitutionally mandated but is theologically imperative. Such rights, however imperfectly framed and implemented, are necessary to keeping the future open and to resisting the impulse, also in our society, to effect an idolatrous closing off of historical change.

Among the universal requirements of democratic governance is the institutional means for transferring the authority to govern. In a democracy every government is temporary, for the time being, until further notice. The means for transferring authority aim at maximum consultation and participation by the people governed. Although this goal can theoretically be achieved in different ways, the way it is generally accomplished is through popular elections. Elections must be regular, at specified times. They must be contested, as open as possible to every viewpoint and interest group. They must be decisive, effectively bestowing governing authority upon the elected party or persons. We note that nowhere today is there democratic governance in the absence of regular, contested, and decisive elections.

Human Rights as Prior Rights

Finally, and perhaps most profoundly, democratic governance subscribes to a distinctive understanding of human rights. That understanding is that human rights are prior rights. That is, human rights are not established by the state. The state is bound to acknowledge and respect those rights which have their source in the transcendent dignity of the human person created by God.

Valid distinctions are made between categories of human rights—personal, civil, political, economic, and social. Individual and communal freedom from terror and coercion is essential to the protection of all human rights. Repressive regimes of both the left and the right frequently and falsely pit social and economic rights against the rights of freedom. But without freedom persons cannot pursue their economic and social well-being as they deem best. And without freedom the economic and social advances which regimes claim for the poor cannot be examined and verified. As a matter of empirical fact, those societies which give priority to freedom generally secure social and economic rights more successfully than do those societies which attempt social and economic advance at the cost of freedom.

The most fundamental of all human rights is the freedom of religious faith and practice. Religion is both freedom's shield and central sphere of action.

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"For religion," Pope John Paul II has declared, "consists in the free adherence of the human mind to God, which is in all respects personal and conscientious; it arises from the desire for truth and in this relation the secular arm may not interfere, because religion itself by its nature transcends all things secular." Religious freedom consists of many parts: the freedom to believe, to worship, to teach, to evangelize, to collaborate in works of mercy, and to witness to the public good. Where religious freedom is violated, all other human rights are assaulted at their source.

The churches should be relentless in protesting every infringement of freedom, especially of the freedom of conscience and association, and most especially of religious freedom. In protesting human rights' violations, governments will of necessity take into account many considerations—political, diplomatic, military, and economic. The ethics of the Church, however, are not the ethics of Caesar. In witnessing to the transcendent dignity of the human person, the churches are bound not by reasons of state but by obedience to Christ. Therefore the witness of the churches should reflect an unwavering adherence to a single standard in the judgment of human rights. Whether the regime in question is repressive only in order to maintain itself in power or whether it aspires to totalitarian control over its people, whether it fashions itself as rightist or leftist, whether it is friend or foe or neutral toward whatever great power, to the extent that it violates the rights of people to be the artisans of their own destiny it blasphemes against the divine intent for human life. The churches dare never be apologists for such blasphemy in the name of some higher social good. Because every person is called to the fullness of humanity revealed in Our Lord Jesus Christ, there is no higher good than the human person. With particular respect to the weakest and most vulnerable members of the human community, Christians insist that no human being is expendable.

Sustaining the Democratic Idea Today

In our radically imperfect world, the democracy and freedom which we affirm is always imperiled. As faith-filled realists, we reject the sentimental illusion that democracy is a natural product of the progress of an essentially good humanity. We likewise reject the determinist dogma that freedom is produced by the denial of freedom in a process of inevitable revolutionary change. Wherever it exits, democracy—which is both the product and protector of freedom—is a human enterprise and a divine gift. It does not exist in most of the nations of the world, and nowhere does it exist securely. Those of us who are blessed to live under relatively democratic governments are stewards of a possibility that is to be preserved for the whole world. Democracy is not an achievement secured but an experiment to be advanced. It is both gift and task. In helping to sustain the democratic experiment, the churches act not only in their own interest but in the interest of humankind.

In our dangerously divided world, choices must be made. Among the nations and social systems of our time, the choice is never between absolute good and absolute evil. No nation perfectly embodies the democracy we would affirm, and no nation totally represses freedom from which democracy springs. Tragically, the great majority of our sisters and brothers throughout the world live under varying degrees of repression. Certain distinctions can and must be made, however. To all but the willfully blind, it is obvious that some nations aspire to the democratic ideal we have described, while others condemn both the ideal and the fact of democracy as enslaving illusion.

The United States of America is the primary bearer of the democratic possibility in the world today. The Soviet Union is the primary bearer of the totalitarian alternative. For better and for worse, each is a global force and between them there is no pattern of smooth convergence but of real and potential conflict. Armed as they are with weapons of terrifying destructive power, their conflict threatens the future of humankind. Christians are called to earnest prayer and work for mutual disarmament that can reduce that threat. Without denying the reasons for suspicion and anxiety, Christians should also cultivate cooperation in the common interests of otherwise hostile powers.

More profound than the conflict of military and political forces, however, is the conflict over the dignity and destiny of the human person, and the societal order appropriate to that dignity and that destiny. In this conflict, we believe that the United States of America is, on balance and considering the alternatives, a force for good in the world. In this conflict, the leaders of the churches should more clearly evidence their hope that the democratic ideal prevail.

Ideals do not make their way in history except they be carried by persons and institutions. The carriers inescapably fall short of the ideals to which they witness. This is most dramatically true of the Church as the bearer of the Gospel. It is also true in the realm of social and political change. Although it is the primary bearer of the democratic ideal today, America is far from having fully actualized that ideal in its own life. To say that America has a singular responsibility in this world-historical moment does not mean that America is God's chosen nation, as for instance, Israel was chosen by God. God has made no special covenant with America as such. God's convenant is with his creation, with Israel, and with his Church. However, because America is a large and influential part of his creation, because America is the home of most of the heirs of Israel of old, and because this is a land in which his Church is vibrantly free to live and proclaim the Gospel to the world, we believe that

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America has a peculiar place in God's promises and purposes. This is not a statement of nationalistic hubris but an acknowledgment that we bear a particular and grave responsibility. Beyond this, we are also mindful that this is the nation for which we are most immediately accountable.

As America falls short of the ideal it bears, so also some nations aligned with America fall short, while some grievously and systematically violate that ideal. The requirements of national security and international order involve prudential judgments of tortuous moral ambiguity. Because they are not the government, and must always maintain a critical distance from the government, the churches must speak out boldly against violations of human dignity wherever they occur. In a democracy Christian citizens are called upon to make judgments about the wisdom and morality of their country's foreign policy. The Church—in the biblical sense of the Body of Christ—has neither competence nor responsibility to design or control the foreign policy of the United States. As we have said, the mission of the Church is to be the Church—to proclaim the saving Gospel of Christ and to embrace all persons in a sustaining community of caring discipleship. As part of that sustaining and caring activity, agencies and leaders of the churches should address foreign policy issues in order to help Christians exercise their responsibility as citizens.

Democracy and the Witness of the Churches

We are keenly aware that not all Christians share our understanding of democracy and America's role in the world. Especially is this true of some leadership circles in the churches, and most especially of many who are professionally involved in shaping the social witness of the churches. It is our purpose to illuminate the relationship between Christian faith and democratic governance. It is also our purpose to oppose policies and programs in the churches which ignore or deny that relationship. With the prayer that we may always speak the truth in love, we will not hesitate to specify policies, programs, and persons when we believe they are demeaning the Church's witness and obscuring the sufferings of the poor and oppressed. We will speak privately when possible, publicly when necessary. We do not seek controversy, but we will not shrink from controversy. Basic questions about the meaning of freedom, of peace, and of justice must be examined anew. In these ways we would contribute to renewing the social witness of the churches.

Arguments for oppression are evident in our several churches, in some churches more than others. Those who advance such arguments become, whatever their intent may be, apologists for oppression. These arguments are voiced at various levels of episcopal, administrative, journalistic, and academic leadership. We believe that those who espouse these arguments do not as a rule act from design but from bureaucratic and intellectual habit. Their behavior does not constitute a conspiracy but reflects selective compassion for human suffering and indifference to the meaning of democracy in our kind of world.

Apology for oppression is sometimes passionately anti-Communist. It excuses and rationalizes any injustice if it is perpetrated in the name of defeating Communism. Such an approach is morally odious and antithetical to our understanding of religion and democracy. We emphatically reject it.

Much more respectable, influential, and common, however, is apology for oppression that excuses injustice as necessary for the eventual creation of a new and, it is claimed, more equitable social order. The apology for oppression declares that liberal democracy is decadent and dying. It claims that we should welcome, or at least resign ourselves to, inevitable revolutionary change under totalitarian auspices. We declare, however, that history is not the sphere of the inevitable but the sphere of freedom. Within the limits of a life that is bounded by death, free men and women strive for what should be; they do not surrender to what others say must be. Moreover, the results of the revolutions that have denied freedom are now coming in; the record is one of grim failure. In the long struggle of history it is the idea of democracy that is the new, the progressive, the audacious experiment toward the future. We refuse to terminate this promising venture by returning to the false securities of an oppressive past that now advertises itself as the inevitable future.

Another form of apology for oppression asserts that we have no right to impose our values upon others. It is said that other people must choose their own form of government. It is said that other people do not share our concern for democratic governance and human rights. This combination of lies and half-truths conceals a host of cultural and, more often than not, racial prejudices. It is monstrous to assert on behalf of others that they do not feel about their basic human rights as keenly as we feel about ours. It is disingenuous to say that other people must be free to choose their own form of government and, at the same time, to support precisely those forces that would deny them their freedom to choose.

It is also an apology for oppression to claim that, faced with repressive oligarchies or militarisms, people often have no alternative to Marxist-Leninist revolution. In truth there is hardly a country in the world without advocates of democratic reform. Again and again, however, the democratic forces are crushed between the false anti-Communists of the reactionary right, on the one hand, and naive or knowing supporters of the totalitarian left, on the other. In these and other ways, the freedom and justice which we cherish for ourselves are denied to others.

Wherever the churches can influence situations of oppression, and whenever the churches address

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themselves to American foreign policy, we beg our leaders to heed and support the forces for democratic change. Whether we approve or disapprove of such influence, in many places American power and opinion can be decisive. Those Christian leaders who collaborate in the denial of freedom and justice to others bear an ominous moral responsibility.

Some even excuse the denial of elementary religious freedom. This is the most contemptible betrayal of trust. It is said that securing social and economic rights requires the sacrifice of formal, "bourgeois" freedoms—including the freedom to assemble for worship without penalty, to proclaim the Gospel publicly, or even the freedom of parents to instruct their children in the faith. It is very hard to understand how Christians could deem it a secondary or subordinate concern that believers be able to practice their faith. Yet some leaders in our churches praise the alleged achievements of totalitarian regimes, while acknowledging incidentally, if at all, that it is unfortunate that these regimes have brutally repressed religion. And some leaders welcome warmly the religious and secular agents of totalitarian and repressive regimes while seeming to turn a deaf ear to the cries of believers in prisons and concentration camps who are persecuted for nothing more than the profession of their faith. It is indeed very hard to understand. Many church members today voice the suspicion that the primary solidarity of some leaders is not with the Church and their primary loyalty is not to the Gospel of Christ. That suspicion must be understood and addressed in order to renew the credibility of Christian social witness.

Our Hope

Now we have explained, briefly and no doubt inadequately, the reasons for the Institute on Religion and Democracy. The issues are not simple. Our answers are not infallible. We are prone to err and we live by forgiveness. The debate is not between liberals and conservatives, between left and right. The debate is between those who do believe and those who do not believe that there is a necessary linkage between Christian faith and human freedom. The debate is between those who do and those who do not believe that in this moment of history democracy is the necessary product and protector of freedom. And the debate is between those who do and those who do not believe that freedom, an end in itself, is also the surest way to a greater measure of that peace and justice which we are to seek.

We do not know whether democracy is the wave of the future. We do know that the future will be darker if the democratic idea is extinguished. We do know that the victims of freedom's denial already number in the many millions. And we do know that one day, before the judgment throne of God, those who were voiceless will ask what we said on their behalf. What we say or do may seem to be of little moment. But in the face of every discouragement we will persist in hope because finally, as we said at the start, Jesus Christ is Lord. FT

ON TRUTH AND LIES. Truthfulness has never been counted among the political virtues, because it has little indeed to contribute to that change of the world and of circumstances which is among the most legitimate political activities. Only where a community has embarked upon organized lying on principle, and not only with respect to particulars, can truthfulness . . . become a political factor. . . . Since the liar is free to fashion his "facts" to fit the profit and pleasure, or even the mere expectations of his audience, the chances are that he will be more persuasive than the truthteller. Indeed, he will usually have plausibility on his side; his exposition will sound more logical, as it were, since the element of unexpectedness—one of the outstanding characteristics of all events—has mercifully disappeared.

—Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (1968)

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Martha Nussbaum, Poets' Defender

Alan Jacobs

Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life. By Martha C. Nussbaum. *Beacon. 143 pp. $20.*

I

Even in Plato's *Republic* Socrates can already speak of "the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry," quoting dismissive remarks now-unknown poets made about philosophy as though such jibes were common intellectual currency in his fourth-century B.C. Athens. But for us the "quarrel" begins when Plato banishes the poets from his ideal commonwealth—and the quarrel, as Martha Nussbaum often laments, continues even today.

The poets, Socrates complains early on in the *Republic*, thoughtlessly arouse emotions that cloud the citizen's judgment; they present pictures of the gods' behavior that young persons should be shielded from, lest they copy the shameful actions of the immortals. Socrates' argument here is politically pragmatic, unconcerned whether the poets' stories about the gods are true. But in the final book of the *Republic*, he returns to the poets to offer a further condemnation. In the intervening books he has developed the theory of the Forms (the ideal heavenly realities of which our material world offers mere copies), and so is now able to point out that poetry is *not* true, since its objects of representation are the things of this world. It presents us with mere imitations of imitations, copies of copies.

But of course Plato is a lover of poetry, and moreover a great poet himself. So it may not be surprising that he finds a possible means by which poetry may redeem itself and gain readmittance into the ideal polis: Poetry can defend itself, Socrates says, but it must speak philosophically, it must make an *argument*, it must put aside at least some of its power to charm the senses and the emotions. In short, poetry may enter the polis only on philosophy's terms, not on its own.

From time to time, poets have taken up this challenge; in the English tradition one thinks especially of the sixteenth-century Sidney and the nineteenth-century Shelley. But still more poets have refused to play the game by the philosophers' rules. Must poets, then, accept their permanent banishment? Not necessarily, for Socrates invites "those who aren't poets but lovers of poetry" to show that poetry is "not only pleasant but also beneficial to regimes and human life. And we should listen benevolently. For surely we shall gain if it should turn out to be not only pleasant but beneficial."

Some scholars have suggested that in his *Poetics* Aristotle does just this. Certainly that is what a modern (self-proclaimed) Aristotelian has done. In her recent book, *Poetic Justice*, Martha Nussbaum directly accepts the Socratic challenge. By the second page of her book, she has already linked modern political economists with Mr. Gradgrind, the fictional Benthamite educator and poetry-hater of Dickens' *Hard Times*. Now she echoes (but goes beyond) the words of Plato:

> If one should have some doubts about the books Mr. Gradgrind favors—as to their adequacy as visions of humanity, expressions of a complete sense of social life—one might then see in the very zeal of Mr. Gradgrind's repudiation a reason to invite idle storybooks into the house to plead their cause. And if they should plead their cause successfully, we might have compelling reasons to invite them to stay: not only in our homes and schools, shaping the perceptions of our children, but also in our schools of public policy and development studies, and in our government offices and courts, and even in our law schools—wherever the public imagination is shaped and nourished—as essential parts of an education for public rationality.

Alan Jacobs *is Associate Professor of English at Wheaton College.*

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The claims for poetry that emerge at the end of this passage are not only bold, they are very general; their boldness and their generality are alike problematic. Literary experience is defined too narrowly to do justice to the diverse worlds of poetry, and the poets whom she seeks to enlist in her army are not, by and large, conscientious objectors to the public sphere. But how these problems come to beset *Poetic Justice* is best understood in the context of Nussbaum's long-standing determination to make literature *useful.*

II

Martha Nussbaum has devoted the greater part of her career to the rehabilitation of poetry for philosophical purposes—or, if that seems to make poetry merely instrumental to the greater task of philosophizing, Nussbaum can put it in another, more evenhanded way:

> For the Greeks of the fifth and early fourth centuries B.C., there were not two separate sets of questions in the area of human choice and action, aesthetic questions and moral-philosophical questions, to be studied and written about by mutually detached colleagues in different departments. Instead, dramatic poetry and what we now call philosophical inquiry in ethics were both typically . . . seen as ways of pursuing a single and general question: namely, how human beings should live.

In brief, philosophy and literature were different means by which the same goal was sought: *eudaimonia,* a key word often translated as "happiness" but more accurately rendered (by Nussbaum among many others) as "human flourishing."

In the Introduction to her *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (1990), Nussbaum relates that when she was in high school and college, she wrote papers about literary works that explored questions that she would later learn to call "philosophical" questions. Reading ancient literature especially, she says, "I always wished to ask, What does all this mean for human life? What possibilities does this recognize or deny?" And she found that her teachers encouraged such reflections, such pursuits. But graduate school was a different matter. Here she encountered pressure to choose: the literary classicists understood their task to be "philological and to some extent aesthetic" rather than philosophical, while the ethical theories she encountered in studying philosophy were in different ways and for different reasons "hostile to literature." The value of Nussbaum's work derives chiefly, I think, from the steadfastness with which she has refused such choices.

An especially noteworthy and brilliant example of how this refusal can bear fruit is found in Nussbaum's reading of Plato's *Symposium* in her first book, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (1986). To the conventionally trained philosopher, the sudden appearance of the drunken Athenian general Alcibiades just after Socrates finishes his speech seems to be little more than a way, perhaps a rather clumsy way, for Plato to bring the dialogue to an end. Indeed, in G. M. A. Grube's classic commentary, *Plato's Thought*—as in a number of other accounts—a detailed summary of the *Symposium* ends with Socrates' argument; one would never learn from Grube that Alcibiades had entered at all.

But the scholar trained in literary reading smells a rat. Why would Plato, who as a writer obviously knows what he is doing, use such an artificial means to end his dialogue? And stranger still, why would he allow Alcibiades to go on for several pages in a rambling confession of his love for Socrates? Nussbaum contends that the speech of Alcibiades enacts a refutation of the speech which Socrates has just completed. For Socrates, true love is a matter of ascent (this is the famous *scala amoris*) from the physical and the individual to the spiritual and universal: the purest form of love is love of the Forms, or of Being itself; love in its highest and best sense is undifferentiated and abstract. But for Alcibiades it is senseless to speak of love-in-general: the only way to talk meaningfully about love is to celebrate the particular person whom one loves, and in his case that is Socrates.

Plato, then—this is the heart of Nussbaum's argument—presents us with a "harsh and alarming" picture of love: "We see two kinds of value, two kinds of knowledge; and we see that we must choose. One sort of understanding blocks out the other. The pure light of the eternal form eclipses, or is eclipsed by, the flickering lightning of the . . . unstably moving body." The traditional philosophical interpreters of Plato, like Grube, do not see the choice because their disciplinary training has already eclipsed one of the possibilities. It is Nussbaum's determination to understand the philosophical and the literary as different means to the same end (*eudaimonia*) that enables her to recognize the choice that we are offered.

But, unlike Plato in his thinking about the divergent ways of love, Nussbaum does not seem to believe that we must choose between the two disciplinary ways of philosophy and literature. Her books remind us that when we are engaged in abstract, theoretical reflection we occasionally need to ground our thought in the particular and historical, and by that grounding to find out if our theories *work*; likewise, when we are caught in the flow of particular events and historical experiences, we need to pause long enough to consider where we are going, what all these particulars add up to. Philosophy and literature thus need each other.

But because Nussbaum has addressed most of her

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work primarily to philosophers rather than to literary critics, her emphasis has typically been on the poverty of a moral philosophy that fails to use the great resources provided by literature. In the essays that make up *Love's Knowledge*, she focuses on the novel as the literary genre most useful in tracing the lineaments of our moral lives. The sheer length and complexity of great novels, their patient playing out of the consequences of our moral choices, make them infinitely more useful than the brief schematic narratives that are commonly employed by moral philosophers to illustrate their claims. Indeed, says Nussbaum, any philosophical examples that were to develop "the particularity, the emotive appeal, the absorbing plottedness, the variety and indeterminacy of good fiction" would by that very development *become* works of literature.

What Nussbaum finds most compelling in great novels is their accounts of the richness of our *emotional* lives. In *Love's Knowledge* and elsewhere Nussbaum uses the fiction of Proust, Henry James, Dickens, and others to buttress her claim that the emotions are not necessarily opposed to reason—that, in fact, a truly rational person will experience certain emotions as the consequence of proper understanding. (It would be irrational *not* to feel grief upon hearing of the Oklahoma City bombing.)

Moreover, Nussbaum argues, there are some kinds of knowledge that are accessible to us only when we experience certain emotions such as love. There is a reciprocal relationship between love and knowledge: we love people because of what we know about them, to be sure, but we also come to know them more fully because we love them. Novels are particularly rich in their explorations of these issues, though such understanding need not be gained *only* from novels: In *The Therapy of Desire* (1994) Nussbaum seeks—not always successfully—to discover in certain Hellenistic thinkers a distinctively philosophical account of the value of the emotions. She is particularly fond of the stoic thinker Chrysippus, whom she thinks to be "the most profound thinker on emotion in the entire philosophical tradition."

In sum, Nussbaum has been engaged for some years now in a fascinating and important project in ethical thought. Her work has distinct and troubling limitations, to be sure: one would never learn from Nussbaum that there are people called Jews and Christians who have had a thing or two to say about what constitutes human flourishing. Moreover, as Donald Marshall has pointed out, Nussbaum never considers what might happen if one were to formulate one's personal *telos* as "holiness" or "righteousness" rather than goodness. (Nussbaum's lack of a discernible interest in religion has not prevented the University of Chicago Divinity School from assigning her a course in Theological Ethics.) But her work has been exciting and provocative nonetheless—or only somewhat the less.

And in *Poetic Justice* she seeks to expand her range: from a primary interest in the personal dimensions of ethics to the social and political implications of the philosophical-literary enterprise. Which is appropriate, after all, since most of the ancient thinkers who have inspired her work certainly understood that our quest for *eudaimonia* is profoundly dependent upon the social order in which we live and think. But this transition exposes certain flaws in Nussbaum's project.

III

Poetic Justice seeks to employ literature as a tool for training the minds, and more particularly the emotions, of the Guardians of the state. It is thus a characteristically Platonic project: Nussbaum simply disagrees with Plato about the role of the emotions and in the growth of mature persons. She quite explicitly states that many of the ideas of this book started to take form when she began to teach a course called Law and Literature at the University of Chicago Law School. To these future lawyers, judges, corporate leaders, and politicians, Nussbaum wishes to present a vision, a distinctly *literary* vision, of a more just and moral polity. Though she uses a number of texts (by E. M. Forster, Richard Wright, Walt Whitman), her key and recurrent model is Dickens' *Hard Times*. What she wants above all is to formulate a philosophical and political justification for Dickens' repudiation of Benthamite utilitarianism, and his replacement of it with an imaginative sympathy for others. Nussbaum is not at all afraid of speaking in the classic terms of liberal earnestness: she celebrates "the value of humanity as an end in itself," she encourages empathy and understanding, broadmindedness, toleration. The virtue of literature, she says, is that it encourages these tendencies.

What Nussbaum wants above all is a political economy that does not reduce persons to mere digits or counters. This is a goal both admirable and common; but how is it to be accomplished? I find it interesting that Nussbaum chooses to emphasize the education of the leaders, not of the people themselves. In other words, her project suggests that if our governments are going to treat people more humanely, that will not be because the people are sufficiently educated and articulate to demand humane treatment, but rather because their Guardians have been convinced through the imaginative sympathy engendered by the novels they read to be kinder and gentler toward their charges. So they read *Hard Times* in order to gain sympathy for the poor, Wright's *Native Son* in order to gain sympathy for racial minorities, and Forster's *Maurice* in order to gain sympathy for homosexuals. (E. D. Hirsch, Jr., in his book *Cultural Literacy*, understood that the problem with making novels work publicly is that the reading of them is private. His solution to this problem was to recom-

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mend that as many Americans as possible read the same novels, and other works, in school, so that there would be a common fund of knowledge on which we could draw to help form a more unified polity. This recommendation, of course, earned Hirsch the label of white male cultural imperialist. Nussbaum dodges this kind of problem by making her recommendations *only* to the Guardians. What the underlings read does not here concern her.)

So primarily, what literature does for our Guardians is to cultivate in them a richer and more responsive emotional life: this adds vivid color to the bland landscape of Benthamite economic thought, and puts human faces to political decisions. I don't see how anyone could object very strenuously to this, provided (as Nussbaum does provide) that "rules and formal decision procedures, including procedures inspired by economics," are not supplanted but rather supplemented and corrected by the emotional knowledge provided in literature; and provided also that we caution ourselves against using emotional affect frivolously and sentimentally. Those ubiquitous network news stories about the "common people" whose lives are destroyed by out-of-touch policy wonks inside the Beltway do not meet any reasonable criteria for the appropriate political use of emotion and narrative particularity. Nussbaum knows this too, and that is why (I think) she warns that "the emotions have limitations and dangers . . . and their function in ethical [and political] reasoning must be carefully circumscribed."

But what are the particular emotions that are to be cultivated in Chicago's Guardians by their reading of literature? It soon becomes apparent to the reader of *Poetic Justice* that Nussbaum has an extremely limited range of emotions in mind. Indeed, as far as I can see, literature does little other than inculcate in our future leaders a sympathy for the downtrodden, the oppressed, the marginalized. In part this emphasis stems from Nussbaum's repeated claim that we need literature to help us "concern ourselves with the good of other people whose lives are distant from our own," and the experiences of the Guardians are likely to be quite "distant" from the poor, from racial and ethnic minorities, and from homosexuals. But I think it stems more fundamentally from Nussbaum's apparent conviction that ethical and political flourishing are *defined* by the virtues of sympathy and toleration. Granted that there is a place, and a significant place, for sympathy and toleration in our public life; but might there not also be a place for more fully and carefully developed faculties of *judgment*?

Nussbaum has loaded her dice by using novels whose overt purpose is precisely to generate sympathy for marginal figures. But what if she had chosen another kind of book—say, for instance, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*? Anna's tragic story, the terrible price she has to pay for her adulterous relationship with Count Vronsky, certainly and properly elicits our sympathy, but Tolstoy would have us recognize Anna's moral culpability as well. The book's celebrated and controversial epigraph—"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord" (Romans 12:19)—points to this twofold message. It encourages us to recognize that Anna has sinned and put herself in moral and spiritual danger, that she has alienated herself from God (as she perfectly well knows and admits to herself); but it also warns us against condemnation from some supposed position of moral authority and superiority. We are invited to acknowledge the immutability of the moral law, and to place ourselves under its judgment even as we also recognize Anna's placement.

Here, then, is a work of literature which calls for something more than sympathy, and moreover which distinguishes sympathy from toleration. For the careful reader of *Anna Karenina* will wonder if pure tolerance is indeed the most charitable, the most *sympathetic*, of responses to Anna's adultery—and to the society which loudly condemns adultery at one moment and winks slyly at it the next. To take one of Nussbaum's examples, it should be possible for a reader of Forster's *Maurice* to grow in understanding of, and even sympathy for, homosexuals without automatically endorsing governmental recognition of gay marriages. The possible meanings of the words "sympathy" and "toleration" are not exhausted by a recitation of the preferred policies of the left wing of the Democratic Party.

All this is not to say that Nussbaum does not employ judgment in her book—she certainly does, as do her novelists. Wright is scarcely tolerant of racism (nor should he be), Dickens is scathing towards the utilitarian Gradgrind and his cohorts, and Nussbaum, in claiming that the enemies targeted by Wright and Dickens are her enemies too, joins their condemnations. The problem is that Nussbaum fails properly to *account for* the political uses of moral censure. What are the potential political uses of Dostoyevsky's terrifying portrait of one kind of criminal mind in *Crime and Punishment*, or of others in Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* or even Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song*? Could it be that the reading of some novels might arouse the courage necessary to decree that there are some persons who disqualify themselves from participation in our polity? Dorothy Parker once wrote that a performance by the young Katherine Hepburn "ran the gamut of emotion from A to B." Nussbaum allows literature a similar range of feeling.

IV

The question of what possible role poetry *can* play in the polity suggests the question of what role poetry *wants* to play in the polity. Nussbaum has

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failed to take into account the historical development of literature in relation to its surrounding culture, especially in the two centuries since the advent of Romanticism. If indeed in ancient Athens poets were willing to serve the community that sought to know itself and its commitments, for two hundred years now modern poetry has reveled in its dissociation from the colorless and quotidian concerns of petty politics.

Shelley, it is true, famously said that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world," but one would be sorely mistaken if one concluded that Shelley wished for these legislators to be acknowledged. If the poets' legislative role were to be publicly recognized and accepted, then poets would be in the position of having to acknowledge their responsibility and accountability to those on whose behalf they are legislating. But such an acknowledgment would be utterly at odds with the Romantic belief in the autonomy (which is to say the unaccountability to anything but itself) of the poetic imagination.

Nussbaum appears not to know this, and so in a grotesquely inappropriate move appropriates Walt Whitman to buttress her project. She speaks of the conviction, which she shares with Whitman, that "storytelling and literary imagination are not opposed to rational argument but can provide essential ingredients in a rational argument." But Whitman, in company with virtually every other figure in American Romanticism, would scarcely have accepted this endorsement of reason: like most Romantics, he accepted the Enlightenment's radical distinction between reason on the one hand and on the other hand emotion and imagination, and merely inverted the hierarchy. Instead of seeking to use reason to master feeling, he saw the great cultural task of his time as the liberation of feeling and imagination from the tyrannies of reason. This can only happen if feeling and imagination break the shackles of accountability to the public sphere.

Whitman says this about as plainly as it is possible to say it. When society does not heed its poets, "things are grotesque, eccentric, fail of their full returns." The poet does not, and if he is to be a poet cannot, listen to others, but woe unto those others if they do not listen to him. "He is the arbiter of the diverse, he is the key, / He is the equalizer of his age and land." In case anyone has failed to get the point, Whitman restates it: the poet "is no arguer, he is judgment (Nature accepts him absolutely.) / He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun falling round a helpless thing." "Not as the judge judges"—that is, not according to precedent and law, before which he stands as a humble interpreter; not according to constitutional criteria for a responsible judiciary. The poet's judgments cannot be argued with any more than the brilliance of the noonday sun can be gainsaid: the light the poet sheds on humanity and Nature is just like that, clear and vivid and plain enough for all with eyes to see.

Astonishingly, Nussbaum quotes just these lines to support her claim that poets can be useful servants to a polity in quest of general *eudaimonia*. To her, Whitman's comparison of the poet to the sunlight simply means that the poet's vision is detailed and specific and complete, that it "illuminates the situation of the helpless," that it "does not yield to bias or favor." The titanic arrogance of Whitman's claims for himself and his fellow poets utterly eludes her. Caught up in her enthusiasm for readmitting poets to the Republic from which Plato banished them, Nussbaum fails to notice that the poets have not only grown accustomed to banishment, they have come to like and prefer it. *They don't want back in.* They prefer their little shacks just outside the walls of the great city because there no one tells them what to do, and left to their own devices convince themselves that it is really the great city that lies beyond the pale of *their* settlement. More precisely, they are like Milton's Satan, newly deposited in hell, who says, "Here at least we shall be free. . . . Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven." Nussbaum cheerfully tells the post-Romantic *literati* that in her ideal commonwealth they can be *useful*, not suspecting that there is nothing in the world they find more horrifying.

Martha Nussbaum has never written a boring book, and *Poetic Justice* is no exception: it is usually stimulating and provocative, though not as often or as much as her earlier work, especially *The Fragility of Goodness*. But her project of bringing about a specifically *political* reunion of reason and emotion, economics and poetry, is fraught with errors and inconsistencies. Perhaps it can ultimately be done, but first Nussbaum must convince poets that the radical autonomy they earned through the Romantic movement came at far too high a price. And she must be able to demonstrate that this glorious reunion of poetry and (economic and political) philosophy will do more than provide further support for the already agreed-upon policies of American left-liberalism. Literature and politics alike are richer than that, and cut out for better things. FT

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Ralph Reed's Real Agenda

Richard John Neuhaus

Active Faith: How Christians Are Changing the Soul of American Politics. *Free Press. 312 pp. $25.*

Ralph Reed is frequently depicted as the innocent, and therefore deceptive, face of the religious right. Political opponents who are convinced that the Christian Coalition and its allies represent an invasion of the aliens taking over our public square will be further maddened by his new book, *Active Faith: How Christians Are Changing the Soul of American Politics.* Aimed at the cultured despisers of religiously inspired conservatism, *Active Faith* is in tone so very reasonable, so very irenic, so very determined not to intimidate.

At the same time, Reed is preaching to his choir and cautioning them not to get carried away with their new-found political influence. While "changing the soul of American politics," they must not lose their own souls to the lust for political power. In this connection, the book contains surprisingly candid revelations about tensions within the religious right, including sharp critiques of its earlier manifestations, such as the Reverend Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority. If religious conservatives do not learn from the past, warns Reed, they will yet snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

Among the lessons to be learned is that action divorced from theory has a way of getting you where you never wanted to go. In this connection, Reed ponders the fact that the political influence of the religious right is all out of proportion to its paucity of theological understanding. Echoing Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind,* Reed laments that evangelical Protestants have no real theology of politics. Moralistic passion is not enough.

Although he admits he is no theologian, Reed's own reflections seem to track the lines proposed by thinkers such as Reinhold Niebuhr and John Courtney Murray. Noll observes that the more thoughtful evangelicals today are taking their political philosophy and moral theology from Catholic social thought. Reed does not develop his theological ideas in the present book, but what he does say tends to confirm Noll's observation. This may suggest fascinating possibilities for the future of the Christian Coalition as it develops the Catholic connection through its new affiliate, the Catholic Alliance. Some of those most closely connected with the Coalition, including Pat Robertson himself, are also strong supporters of the initiative "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (which appeared in First Things, May 1994).

Theology and political philosophy are not Mr. Reed's strong suit. There are occasional howlers, such as his assertion that "the best standard for government is still John Stuart Mill's principle of allowing the greatest liberty possible until someone else's life or liberty is jeopardized." Whatever else the religious right is about, it is surely not premised upon reestablishing Mill's liberty principle as the norm of just governance. There are conceptual resources in the Protestant, especially Calvinist, tradition that Reed does not mention—for instance, Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch politician and theological thinker who gave birth to a school of political philosophy that accents "spheres of sovereignty" in a manner similar to the Catholic teaching on "subsidiarity."

Reed rightly wants a theology and philosophy that will equip Christians for "governing." Among the candidates for that role are Niebuhr, Murray, Kuyper, and Catholic social teaching, particularly as the last is articulated by John Paul II. The 1991 encyclical, *Centesimus Annus* (The Hundredth Year), to cite but one example, is a rich lode of Christian wisdom for what Reed wants to say about the connections between tolerance and truth, freedom and moral judgment. While Reed seems not to be

Richard John Neuhaus *is Editor-in-Chief of* First Things.

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versed in these more promising traditions, there are some ways of thinking he knows and rejects. He mentions very specifically the Reconstructionist movement promoted by R. J. Rushdoony and his associates.

Reconstructionism—sometimes called Theonomy or Dominion Theology—is a bastard form of Calvinism contending that the American constitutional order must be replaced by a new order based on "Bible Law." Reed's rejection of this school is notable because, rightly or wrongly, his boss Pat Robertson (to whom Reed evidences unwavering loyalty) has sometimes been accused of advocating a modified brand of Reconstructionism. Reed's words are unequivocal and, given the diverse constituencies on which the Christian Coalition draws, bold: "Reconstructionism is an authoritarian ideology that threatens the most basic civil liberties of a free and democratic society. The pro-family movement [Reed's standard term for the cause he champions] . . . must unequivocally dissociate itself from Reconstructionism and other efforts to use the government to impose biblical law through direct political action. It must firmly and openly exclude the triumphalist and authoritarian elements from the new theology of Christian political involvement."

Among other lessons to be learned from the past is the need to present the agenda not as one of radical reaction but as an effort to reconstitute the "mainstream" of American political and social history. *Active Faith* is in largest part an effort to relocate the mainstream of American social and political history. For readers who have been miseducated to believe that ours is a "secular" society and that the current entanglement of politics and religion is something new and threatening, the most instructive chapter may be Reed's marvelously compact historical updating of Alexis de Tocqueville's argument that religion is "the first political institution" of American democracy.

Reed, who earned his Ph.D. in American history at Emory University, provides a concise account of religion and politics from the First Great Awakening that made possible the American Revolution, through the abolition of slavery and prohibition of alcohol, up to the civil rights movement under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. The new and threatening thing, according to Reed, is not religiously informed political action but what someone has called "the naked public square" in which politics is divorced from the moral convictions of the American people—convictions that are typically grounded in religion.

At one level, Reed understands himself to be contending for a recovery of democratic self-governance. Here his argument is redolent of that advanced by the late Christopher Lasch in his final testament, *The Revolt of the Elites*. Lasch, once a champion of the 1960s "new left," decried contemporary liberalism's redefinition of democracy in terms of upward mobility rather than self-governance. The promise of democracy, in that view, is the opportunity to join the ruling elites who assume that "the people" are not competent to govern themselves. I have elsewhere described these elites as the "overclass" that, having despaired of democratic persuasion, employ the universities, philanthropies, media, and, above all, the courts to govern without the consent of the governed.

Directed as it is against that overclass, some might describe *Active Faith* as a kind of populist manifesto, and populist overtones are by no means absent. Reed, however, eschews populist stridency, claiming that he contends for the renewal of the American democratic experiment, and I expect Kit Lasch would agree. (William Jennings Bryan comes in for major, and critical, discussion. It is suggested that Pat Buchanan is repeating some of Bryan's mistakes.) In any event, Reed's morally substantive account of American democracy is necessary reading for those who have been exposed only to the procedural and radically secularized accounts that have in the last thirty years dominated teaching from the elementary grades through graduate school.

For most of the book, however, Ralph Reed the historian and political theorist gives way to Ralph Reed the political strategist and activizer of activists. Political junkies will find here a treasure trove of inside calculation about who is trying to use whom, what issues turn on what constituencies, how the Christian Coalition is projecting its fortunes far beyond the 1996 elections, and the ways in which its evangelical Protestant base is reaching out to Catholics and Jews. On the last score, his good intentions are beyond doubt. But, while he has learned the lyrics of respect and even deference, he has not yet picked up on the music of communicating with Catholics and Jews. That does not come easily to one so immersed in the worlds of evangelical Protestantism. *Active Faith* does not evidence an understanding of why so many Jews are so powerfully attached to the notion that, the more secular the society, the safer it is for Jews. As for Catholics, the author has not overcome entirely the habit of equating "Christians" with born-again evangelical Protestants.

Active Faith is a book of many fascinating parts. Especially intriguing, albeit not entirely convincing, is Reed's argument that his movement does not aim to be a political party and is not simply an interest group within the Republican Party but is determinedly "nonpartisan." One gets the impression that the Christian Coalition is nonpartisan in the sense that it would be glad to exercise the same influence in the Democratic Party and any other faction (including Ross Perot's movement) as it does in the Republican. It is hard to know what he means when he says the Coalition is engaged in "post-partisan" politics.

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Perhaps that must be said for IRS purposes, but it is otherwise unhelpful. (The civil suit filed recently against the Coalition by the Federal Election Commission for pro-GOP partisan activity indicates that Reed has a lot of persuading to do.)

Describing his relationship with Ross Perot and the movement that he heads, Reed writes: "There was no discussion of a Perot-Christian alliance or of support for given candidates. But we both agreed that our respective supporters were engaged in rewriting the script of American politics, creating a kind of 'post-partisan' electoral environment in which almost anything could happen—and often did." A little later, there is this: "We saw that our constituents shared many of the same goals: balanced budgets, lower taxes, choice in education, term limits, and political reform. If they could join forces, there would be no legislation that they advocated that could not pass in Congress or the state legislatures and no candidate they could not elect at any level of government." One may wonder if "triumphalist elements" are only found among the Reconstructionists. Reed goes on to say that a union with the Perot movement is unlikely, "but our agendas are not as far apart as is commonly believed, and the future lies much more in our collective efforts than in the traditional two-party system."

That seems a remarkably ahistorical observation for a student of American history to make. The two-party system has been around for a long time and has withstood—or, more accurately, has absorbed—many movements for social and political change. What kind of creature is the Christian Coalition? Reed's efforts to respond to that question are among the least satisfactory parts of *Active Faith.* He says the Coalition "has 1.7 million members and supporters." That's impressive, of course, but one notes the significance of his adding "and supporters." Reed is very modest. In terms of people who favor its basic program, one might claim that the Coalition has thirty million, or even more, "supporters."

Perhaps the Coalition should be understood as a coalition of coalitions. After all, there are many other parts of the religious right: the Family Research Council, Concerned Women of America, Focus on the Family, the large array of pro-life organizations (most of which are religiously inspired), and on and on. It is by no means evident that the leaders of all these groups recognize Ralph Reed as the leader of leaders. On the contrary, and as his book does not disguise, there is considerable competition, distrust, and turf protection within the religious right. So the Coalition is not a coalition of coalitions. And we are assured that it is not a political party, for it does not nominate or elect candidates. Or does it?

I think it accurate to say that the Christian Coalition is not a political party in any ordinary sense of the term. One can imagine how it may become a party at some point in the future, but it is not now. There are at least four factors, however, that distinguish it from other organizations of what is broadly called the religious right. First, it is not a special interest group with a tight focus on one or two issues. *Active Faith* details the ways in which the Coalition, like a political party, works hard to bridge interest groups and combine social and economic discontents that have a political potential. Second, the Coalition is closely coordinated with Pat Robertson's communications empire, and has parlayed the political network built by Robertson's 1988 presidential run. Third, the Coalition has devoted itself to grassroots political organizing within and, when possible, outside the Republican Party. That electoral activity, plus its claim to be the heir of earlier organizations such as the Moral Majority, has captured the media's attention, making "Christian Coalition" and "religious right" almost interchangeable in the minds of many Americans. The fourth differentiating factor, in no way to be underestimated, is the political energy, determination, and intelligence of Ralph Reed.

Part of that intelligence—an intelligence that some will claim is too clever by half—is reflected in the claim that the Christian Coalition is nonpartisan. Like many on the left these days, Reed tends to suggest that his movement is "beyond" the tired old categories such as left and right, liberal and conservative. Thus, in one sense, he belongs to the camp of what David Frum calls the Beyondists. The difference is that he has millions of supporters, and an organization to give their support political effect. The Beyondists of the left, lacking both mass support and organization, are more accurately seen as the Behindists, vainly attempting to turn the clock back to the yesterday when they were tomorrow.

Certainly the religious right is not nonpartisan in the sense of not having a very specific political and social agenda. Some readers might go immediately to the chapter titled "No More Stealth: The Real Agenda." In earlier days Reed compared his agenda to a stealth bomber that gets in under the radar screens of the political establishment. He now confesses that was a mistake and is at pains to lay out the Coalition's short- and long-term goals in an utterly straightforward manner. In this he succeeds, discussing everything from abortion to welfare policy, and from euthanasia to tax credits for educational choice in education, all under the rubric of "pro-family policy."

On abortion, undoubtedly the most fevered question in our public life, there was a notable brouhaha when word got out that Reed's book proposed a weakening of the Republican platform's commitment to the pro-life position. The book did nothing of the sort. The *New York Times* splashed the story of Reed's "change" on the front page, and the next day had to run a front-page retraction (without calling it

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a retraction, of course). While the book suggests alternative language on abortion, Reed clearly supports the formulation of the goal as it is embraced by all the major anti-abortion groups: Every unborn child protected in law and welcomed in life. He also knows that goal will never be achieved perfectly, and will only be achieved partially through democratic persuasion—including the persuasion necessary to pass a constitutional amendment protecting the unborn and others (the "useless" aged, the radically handicapped) who may be denied legal due process.

In candidly setting forth "the real agenda," Reed insists there is no reason for other Americans to feel threatened by the religious right. Perhaps he is right about most Americans, but the irenic purpose of *Active Faith* tends to downplay the intensity of today's conflict over the public definition of our culture. The term "culture war" is not hyperbole.

For instance, unionized teachers who insist that public schools should have a monopoly on state funding, those who believe that the unlimited right to abortion is essential to the flourishing of women, those who would establish homosexuality on a moral and social par with heterosexuality—all these will read *Active Faith* and know that they have met the enemy. It is the Christian Coalition and its director, Ralph Reed. They are not likely to be taken in by this bright, boyish, buoyant advocate of what George Bush might have called a kinder and gentler America.

In his politically astute desire not to frighten the horses, Reed does less than justice, indeed he almost ignores, what may become the most flammable issue in our public life, namely, the usurpation of power by the judiciary. From abortion to doctor-assisted suicide to same-sex marriage, the courts have increasingly arrogated to themselves the big decisions about the ordering of our life together, leaving to the people and their elected representatives the relatively trivial questions of raising or lowering the gasoline tax and balancing the budget. As Ralph Reed surely knows, the great task in the months and years ahead is, if one may be permitted the awful words, to de-legalize and re-politicize the great questions that are properly political. This will not happen without a very sharp challenge to business as usual—a challenge that some will no doubt condemn as an insurrectionary revolt against "the law of the land" (meaning the latest dumb decision of the courts).

The purpose of *Faith Alive* is less to raise alarms than to calm the alarmed. It is a perfectly honorable and understandable purpose. In setting forth "the real agenda," Ralph Reed wants to assure Americans that this won't hurt, or at least it won't hurt very much. But for those with a vested interest in the way things are, and especially for the overclass that has long governed without the consent of the governed, it is going to hurt a great deal. Nonetheless—or precisely for that reason—they should read the book, as should everybody else who wants to understand what may be the most important sociopolitical movement of our time, as interpreted by one of the most thoughtful political players on the scene today. FT

On Behaviorism. The trouble with modern theories of behaviorism is not that they are wrong but that they could become true, that they are actually the best possible conceptualization of certain obvious trends in modern society. It is quite conceivable that the modern age—which began with such an unprecedented and promising outburst of human activity—may end in the deadliest, most sterile passivity history has ever known.

—Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1958)

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Books In Review

The Storyteller and the Scientist

CLIMBING MOUNT IMPROBABLE. By RICHARD DAWKINS. *Norton. 288 pp. $25.*

DARWIN'S BLACK BOX: THE BIOCHEMICAL CHALLENGE TO EVOLUTION. By MICHAEL BEHE. *Free Press. 336 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by **Phillip E. Johnson**

RICHARD DAWKINS began *The Blind Watchmaker*, his influential restatement of Darwinism, with the observation that "Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose." May we consider the possibility that living organisms give that appearance because they actually *were* designed? Dawkins, who is virtually the defining example of an uncompromising scientific materialist, meets that suggestion with the scorn he thinks it deserves. The point of evolutionary science, he says, is to explain how complex things get made from a simple start. An unevolved Designer who is presumably more complex than the things he designs just doesn't fit into that picture. In *Climbing Mount Improbable* Dawkins calls organisms "designoids"—meaning things that look exactly as if they were designed but must actually have been crafted by the "blind watchmaker"—the mindless Darwinian forces of mutation and selection.

PHILLIP E. JOHNSON *is Professor of Law at the University of California, Berkeley, and author of* Darwin on Trial *and* Reason in the Balance.

Biochemist Michael Behe answers that the blind watchmaker thesis is a relic of a nineteenth-century science which lacked the understanding of biological mechanisms that recent advances in molecular biology have provided. The biologists who established the still-dominant Darwinian orthodoxy thought of the cell as an undifferentiated blob of "protoplasm." Like a child imagining he might construct an airplane out of cardboard boxes and pieces of wood, they could blithely propose materialist evolutionary scenarios for biological systems because they had no idea of how those systems actually work. The organism (and especially the cell) was to them a "black box"—a machine that does wonderful things by some mechanism nobody knows.

Behe explains that biochemists are now able to explore part of the

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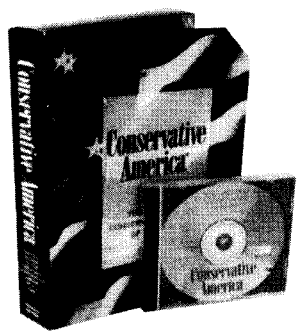

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insides of that black box, and what they find inside is "irreducible complexity." A system is irreducibly complex if it is "composed of several well-matched, interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning." Life at the molecular level is replete with such systems, and biochemists do not even attempt to explain how any one of them could have come into existence by the Darwinian mechanism. The result of biochemical investigation of cellular mechanisms, according to Behe, "is a loud, clear, piercing cry of 'Design!'"

The Behe argument is as revolutionary for our time as Darwin's argument was for his. If true, it presages not just a change in a scientific theory, but an overthrow of the worldview that has dominated intellectual life ever since the triumph of Darwinism, the metaphysical doctrine of scientific materialism or naturalism. A lot is at stake, and not just in science. But can a fair scientific test be devised to judge the competing merits of the positions staked out by Dawkins and Behe? Not if the Designer is ruled out by a priori philosophical dogma, but Dawkins insisted in *The Blind Watchmaker* that his position is falsifiable:

> One hundred and twenty-five years [after the publication of *On the Origin of Species*], we know a lot more about animals and plants than Darwin did, and still not a single case is known to me of a complex organ that could not have been formed by numerous successive slight modifications. I do not believe that such a case will ever be found. If it is—it'll have to be a *really* complex organ, and . . . you have to be sophisticated about what you mean by "slight"—I shall cease to believe in Darwinism.

Dawkins agrees that even a single irrefutable case of irreducible complexity would be fatal to Darwinism. Behe argues that there are many cases of irreducible complexity to be found at the molecular level, with more being discovered as the science progresses. What is more, he argues that the existence of irreducible complexity is *implicitly* accepted by the entire worldwide community of molecular biologists.

I emphasize that word "implicitly," because most prominent molecular biologists definitely would not concede the point *explicitly*. Molecular biology is dominated by metaphysical materialists, many of whom will proclaim to every journalist in sight that their discipline confirms Darwinism in every detail. What molecular biology has to say is determined not by what the biologists say to a popular audience, however, or even to each other in conversation, but by what they publish in the leading scientific journals. Behe reports that what they do not *ever* publish in those journals is detailed scenarios of how even a single complex molecular system could have evolved by a Darwinian process.

In short, the irreducible complexity of molecular systems is controversial among molecular biologists when it is presented as an *idea* with philosophical consequences, and tacitly accepted as reality when it remains in the world of innocent fact. To understand why Behe's argument is so uncontested in the realm of *fact*, and yet why so many scientists find the *concept* of irreducible complexity not only difficult to accept but even impossible to consider, we should start by summarizing the modern understanding of Darwinism, as set out by Richard Dawkins.

Everybody agrees that organisms are extremely complex. As Dawkins puts it with his usual rhetorical skill:

> Physics books may be complicated, but . . . the objects and phenomena that a physics book describes are simpler than a single cell in the body of its author. And the author consists of trillions of those cells, many of them different from each other, organized with intricate architecture and precision-engineering into a working machine capable of writing a book. . . . Each nucleus . . . contains a digitally coded database larger, in information content, than all thirty volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* put together. And this figure is for *each* cell, not all the cells of the body put together.

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That informational complexity is the summit of the "Mount Improbable" of his title. The living world contains innumerable such mountains of complexity, and the Darwinist must show how they can all be reached without the aid of a miraculous leap or a boost from some pre-existing intelligence. Just as a mountain climber cannot jump to the top of the Matterhorn, a (relatively) simple organism like a bacterium cannot even conceivably become a complex plant or animal except in very gradual stages. Fossil experts like Stephen Jay Gould sometimes distinguish between "evolution" and "gradualism," primarily because they are trying to square the former with a fossil record that does not reflect a pattern of gradual transformations, but evolution has to be gradual when it is employed to explain how an unintelligent process assembled all that complex genetic information.

If the blind watchmaker thesis is true, there must be a gradually ascending staircase from the base all the way to the summit. To restate the metaphor in biological language, there must have existed a continuous series of viable intermediate forms between the first replicating organism (whose origin is another subject) all the way to every complex type of organ system and organism that has ever existed. Each step upwards in complexity has to be at least slightly fitter (at leaving descendants) than its predecessor, and the gap between the steps must be no wider than can be bridged by random mutation. On the whole that means *tiny* mutations because, according to Dawkins, mutations large enough to have visible effects are nearly always harmful. The gradual steps have to be virtually omnipresent; a few plausible sections of staircase here and there up the face of the mountain are not enough. As Dawkins concedes, even a single unclimbable precipice spoils the theory—although the difficulty in proving that any one precipice is truly unclimbable means that a great many examples will have to be considered.

Because of his philosophical starting point (science goes from simple to complex), Dawkins does not regard the existence of the staircase as something whose existence needs to be proved, but rather as a logical necessity that only needs to be illustrated. The illustrations consist primarily of imaginative stories and computer simulations. Here, for example, is a synopsis of the Dawkins theory on the evolution of flight:

> To begin with, an ancestor like an ordinary squirrel, living up trees without any special gliding membrane, leaps across short gaps. [It could leap further if it had something to slow a fall.] So natural selection favors individuals with slightly pouchy skin around the arm or leg joints, and this becomes the norm. . . . Now any individuals with an even larger skin web can leap a few inches further. So in later generations this extension of skin becomes the norm, and so on. . . . It is easy to imagine true flapping flight evolving from repetition of the muscular movements used to control glide direction, so average time to landing is gradually postponed over evolutionary time.
>
> Some biologists, however, prefer to see long-distance downhill gliding as the dead end of the tree-jumping line of evolution. True flight, they think, began on the ground rather than up trees. . . . There are some mammals such as kangaroos that propel themselves very fast on two legs, leaving their arms free to evolve in other directions. . . . But bipedal mammals don't seem to have taken the next step and evolved the power of flight. The only true flying mammals are bats, and their wing membrane incorporates the back legs as well as the arms. . . . Perhaps birds began flying by leaping off the ground, while bats began by

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gliding out of trees. Or perhaps birds too began by gliding out of trees. The debate continues.

Many biologists call this kind of "explanation" a *Just-So Story* because it belongs to the realm of children's literature, not science. Dawkins is like the little boy who thought he could make an airplane by adding something that looks like a pair of wings to something that looks like a fuselage. How do you make a bat? No problem, boys and girls, and no need to consider the complications of biochemistry, physiology, and development. Just wait for a squirrel population to grow wings, which it might do one way or another.

Dawkins' computer simulations of evolution have even less connection to biological reality. A computer program can be *designed* (the word deserves emphasis here) to do just about anything, including to mutate stick figures that look vaguely like animals (or trees) into all kinds of shapes. The eminent Darwinist John Maynard Smith dismissed the much more sophisticated computer simulations of Stuart Kauffmann as "fact-free science," because they have no connection to real biological mechanisms.

To move from Dawkins to Behe is like moving from the children's library to the laboratory. Do you want to know how vision might have evolved? Because the biochemistry of vision is a black box to Dawkins, he can speculate without impediment. There are well over forty different types of eyes which, because of their fundamentally differing structure, must have evolved (whatever that means) separately. Some of these eyes are much simpler than others. All an evolutionary storyteller has to do is to start with the apparently simplest version, ignore the neural equipment that has to be present for an organism to make any use of a "photon receptor," and spin a charming tale about how a tiny primitive light-sensing cell might grow up to be a full-fledged eye. That's what Charles Darwin did in 1859, and Dawkins just repackages the same story.

Behe gives us just a bare start towards understanding what a biochemically informed evolutionary theory has to explain:

> When light first strikes the retina a photon interacts with a molecule called 11-cis retinal, which rearranges within picoseconds to *trans*-retinal. (A picosecond is about the time it takes light to travel the breadth of a single human hair.) The change in the shape of the retinal molecule forces a change in the shape of the protein, rhodopsin, to which the retinal is tightly bound. The protein's metamorphosis alters its behavior. Now called metarhodopsin II, the protein sticks to another protein, called transducin. Before bumping into metarhodopsin II, transducin had tightly bound a small molecule called GDP. But when transducin interacts with metarhodopsin II, the GDP falls off, and a molecule called GTP binds to transducin. (GTP is closely related to, but critically different from, GDP.)

Whew! There's a lot more in that vein from Behe, including descriptions of the cilia propulsion system in bacteria, the basic biochemistry of the immune system, and the cell's intricate internal transport system. Don't get the idea that *Darwin's Black Box* is a difficult read, however. The technical passages are set apart from the witty and graceful main text to facilitate skimming. Readers don't have to take in all the details to see the point, which is that Darwinian storytelling simply doesn't work at the molecular level. Each biochemical system requires a stupefyingly complex set of components which affect each other in intricate ways. No component makes sense except as part of the system, and the system doesn't work unless everything is in place. That's irre-

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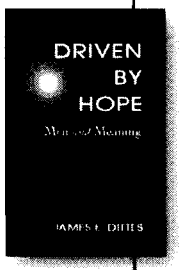

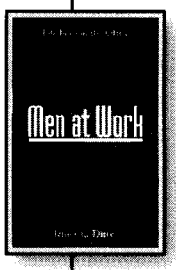

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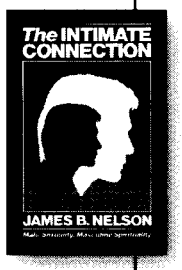

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ducible complexity.

It is notoriously difficult to prove a negative. No matter how irreducible the complexity seems, a storyteller can always invoke concepts like "preadaptation" to bolster the materialist faith that a Darwinian solution is somewhere out there. Fervent statements of faith aren't science, however, and fact-free science doesn't (usually) get published in biochemical journals. The key point in Behe's argument is that there are *no* papers in scientific journals which set out detailed, testable scenarios of how these incredibly complex biochemical systems could be produced by Darwinian-style processes. The very few papers that even attempt to speculate about this subject rely heavily upon what scientists call "hand-waving." The journals of molecular evolution are full of papers documenting sequence comparisons, showing closer or more distant relationships between molecules. What they don't contain is papers documenting the existence of a Darwinian staircase up Mount Improbable. Until somebody fills the gap with scientific papers rather than stories, the best explanation for this situation is that the staircase doesn't exist.

BIOCHEMISTS ARE not likely to challenge Behe in any fundamental way at the factual level. The scientific way to refute the irreducible complexity thesis is to publish the papers detailing how the complex biochemical systems could have evolved, and the scientists already would have done that if they could. The controversy will not be over the facts but over whether Behe has gone "outside of science" by attributing irreducible complexity in biology to "design" rather than to some undiscovered material (i.e., mindless) mechanism. Many scientists and philosophers think that a dedication to materialism is the defining characteristic of science.

Their argument is that an a priori adherence to materialism is necessary to protect the very existence of science. If design in biology is real, then the Designer also might be real,

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and scientific materialists contemplate this possibility (if at all) with outright panic. Science will come to a screeching halt, they insist, because everybody will stop doing experiments and just attribute all phenomena to the inscrutable will of God.

Nonsense. On the contrary, the concept that the universe is the product of a rational mind provides a far better metaphysical basis for scientific rationality than the competing concept that everything in the universe (including our minds) is ultimately based in the mindless movements of matter. Perhaps materialism was a liberating philosophy when the need was to escape from dogmas of religion, but today materialism itself is the dogma from which the mind needs to escape. A rule that materialism should be professed *regardless of the evidence*, says Behe, is the equivalent of a rule that science may not contradict the teachings of a church. "It tries to place reality in a tidy box, but the universe will not be placed in a box."

Behe's fundamental principle is that "scientists should follow the physical evidence wherever it leads, with no artificial restrictions." Science has come as far as it has because scientists of the past were willing to describe the universe as it really is, rather than as the prejudices current in their times would have preferred it to be. The question is whether today's scientists have lost their nerve.

Keeping Company

In Good Company: The Church as Polis. By Stanley Hauerwas. *University of Notre Dame Press. 268 pp. $29.95.*

Reviewed by **Gilbert Meilaender**

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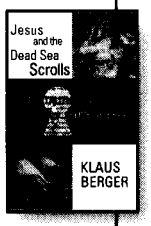

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want left out and why." With those words Stanley Hauerwas sets before us another collection of his essays. I will not tell him that he writes too much, but, before I am done, I hope to tell him what I want left out and why. He will not mind, and he will give as good as he gets.

It is never easy, of course, to review a collection of essays. One can try to trace a central theme throughout the collection or simply take up and comment on particular essays that seem especially striking. I will do a little of each. When reading Hauerwas, one must, however, dig in one's heels just a bit, lest we simply be carried along by the sheer force of his exuberant conviction. He is a master of the throwaway line that deserves more thought than it invites of the reader.

For example, pursuing his general theme that the Church must develop its particular—even odd—identity in a world all too eager to tolerate it to death, Hauerwas writes, "It is wonderful to live in a time when Christians have to discover that another person is also a Christian rather than being able to assume it." Why? We know what he means, of course. He wants the Christian life to mean something and cost something—and is suggesting that this is not likely to be the case if just everyone we meet can lay claim to being a Christian. Nonetheless, I would give a great deal to live in a time and place where I could assume that all whom I met also named the name of Jesus. I don't expect it to happen, short of heaven, but there is nothing inherently good about constantly feeling the need to live in opposition to those around us. It is a necessity often laid upon us in our present pilgrim condition, to be sure, but no more than that. We should feel no compulsion to *make* our life as Christians costly and meaningful; in Jesus God has done that in a way far beyond our capacities.

OR AGAIN, describing the (quite interesting) structure of the course in Christian ethics that he teaches to students at the Duke Divinity School, Hauwerwas says, "From the beginning to the end of the course I make it clear that I have no interest in teaching students about theology and/or ethics. Rather, I hope to transform my own and their lives that we all might live the life of praise more faithfully." It sounds fine until we begin to consider that his calling is precisely to teach his students to think more clearly and precisely about Christian theology and ethics. In noting this we need not suppose that thought should be divorced from practice, as if a "mere" academic exercise were what we had in mind. But Jesus did command us to learn to love God also *with the mind*—that too is part, if only part, of a life of praise. Indeed, it may be a part that the average seminary student, a little inclined to think of seminary as a necessary hurdle on the way toward real service, needs especially to learn. Then, too, ought there not be a little more hesitation about seeking to transform the souls of one's students? Even a teacher as compelling and alluring as Hauerwas no doubt is—perhaps especially such a teacher—must remember to leave something to the Holy Spirit.

Or yet again, praising with engaging perversity *Quas Primas*, the 1925

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encyclical of Pius XI that established the feast of Christ the King and asserted the importance of recognizing Christ's kingship throughout the social order, Hauerwas writes of Pius XI, "His point on this score is crucial: societies constituted on acquisitiveness cannot help but be imprisoned within perpetual conflict and violence." Perhaps so. But those are not the only societies likely to be plagued by conflict and violence. In context, Hauerwas is arguing against our American tendency to emphasize the importance of freedom of religion, arguing that we have purchased such freedom by creating a world in which religion counts for little because acquisitiveness counts for much. But we—or our ancestors—did that, in part at least, because a world in which religion counted for so much in public life had become precisely a world "imprisoned within perpetual conflict and violence."

Perhaps, as Hauerwas is likely to suggest, there might have been better ways to break free of that conflict and violence, but let us not underestimate the importance for human lives of peace. It may be a bourgeois ideal. There may be times when, for the sake of the truth and the call of God, we must be willing to sacrifice it. There may be times when our testimony must be that of the martyr. But we cannot appreciate at all the depth and meaning of such sacrifice, its wrenching quality, unless we know the beauty and the pleasure of the everyday and unheroic. The ordinary times lived in between the challenges—times in which we thank God for the sun and rain, play with our children, read a good book, play a ball game, walk hand in hand. *That* is what must sometimes be sacrificed—and sacrifice is sacrifice only because all that is good, honorable, and God-pleasing. One of the things I want left out of at least some of his future essays is a tendency to suggest—if only by tone and emphasis—that there are not, even in this liberal democracy of America, many faithful Christians rightly seeking time and opportunity to relish such good gifts of God.

But these are throwaway lines. Among the thirteen essays in this volume there are also several that perhaps deserve special mention. Chapter Four ("Whose Church? Which Future? Whither the Anabaptist Vision?") seems to me an especially clear and helpful statement of some of the themes that have dominated Hauerwas' thinking and writing. First written to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Harold Bender's famous essay "The Anabaptist Vision," this piece states succinctly and clearly one of the book's central themes. Anabaptists emphasized both Christian "discipleship" and the "voluntary church." In the historical context of sixteenth-century arguments, the idea of the voluntary church was "a prophetic challenge against mainstream Christianity," an assertion that being a Christian required commitment to the disciple's way of life. But, notes Hauerwas, in a liberal democracy that is no longer "Christendom," continued emphasis upon voluntary commitment seems only to reinforce our contemporary love affair with autonomy. No particular congregation has a claim on us. If we don't like one, we join another—and it's our decision alone.

Surely there is something to this analysis, and surely this situation does sometimes eviscerate the life of our congregations. But the analysis would be stronger if a clear alternative were offered—an alternative that did justice to the truth that God wants from us lives of faith and obedience that are freely given. Objecting at one point to George Will's suggestion that Luther's ninety-five theses had struck a blow for freedom of the individual conscience, Hauerwas writes, "Luther provides no ammunition for Will's project; rather his theses were his contribution to an argument over church discipline." They were that, but not only that. For Luther did believe—whether rightly or wrongly—that true faith must be elicited by the proclamation of the gospel and neither could nor should be compelled.

Perhaps Hauerwas simply disagrees. He does, for example, write approvingly of *Veritatis Splendor* that it "reminds us that we must be wary of thinking that we are different from what we do." One of the things I would like Hauerwas to do in a future essay is take up this question in conversation with a theologian like Luther or Roger Williams.

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I, for example, do not find myself terribly interested in what Stanley Fish has to say on the subject—or in what Hauerwas has to say commenting on Fish. But I would be intensely interested to see whether Hauerwas wants to argue that God's judgment of our person and God's judgment of our works perfectly coincide. I know he loves Aristotle, but I also want to know whether he will Christianize the understanding of the person that he has learned from Aristotle. I want him to leave out of future essays the claim that "the association of the Reformation with presumptions of justification by faith through grace as a center of the Gospel was a profound mistake" unless and until he makes that claim in conversation with a Luther or a Williams—thinkers who, unlike Fish, have some genuine claim on the attention of the Body of Christ.

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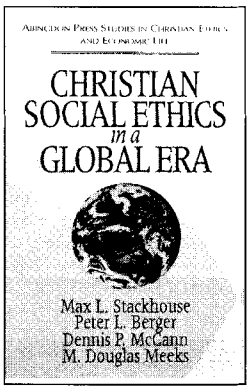

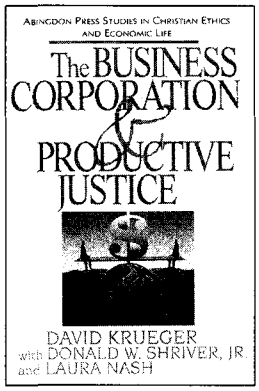
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ANOTHER quite different but equally provocative essay is Chapter Twelve ("A Trinitarian Theology of the Chief End of All Flesh"), written with John Berkman. There is not a lot of good theological writing on "environmental ethics," but this essay raises interesting and important questions. I do not entirely agree with its claims, but they force us to think through issues too easily ignored. Hauerwas and Berkman assert that "the only significant theological difference between humans and animals lies in God's giving humans a unique *purpose.*" They see this point as a critique of mistaken anthropocentrism, but I do not understand why it should be so taken. Precisely because God has called us to be his covenant partners and given unique purposes to our lives, a kind of anthropocentrism may be quite appropriate.

Of course, God may also have unique purposes for the other animals, but if their relation to God is somehow mediated through the human beings who are called to exercise priestly "dominion" over the creation, they may be there in part—though only in part—to serve human life. I am also uncertain why we should be persuaded by the analogy drawn between nonviolence (against our fellow human beings) and vegetarianism. The analogy will work only if we are first persuaded that there is no legitimate anthropocentrism within Christian thought and action. Nevertheless, the essay's clear distinction between its own Christian form of care for the other animals and widespread notions that Christians have "an overriding stake in the survival of the earth" or of the human species is powerful and cleansing. We would all be well served if Hauerwas were to develop these themes in greater detail.

"I AM," Hauerwas writes, "a theologian with a theological position that makes no sense unless a church actually exists that is capable of embodying the practices of perfection." Shall we regard this as a *reductio* of his entire body of work? That would

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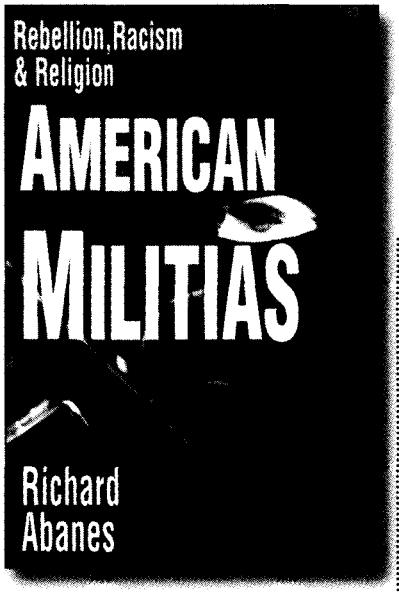

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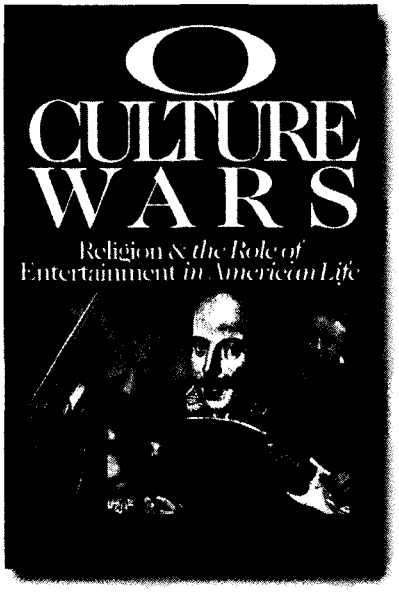

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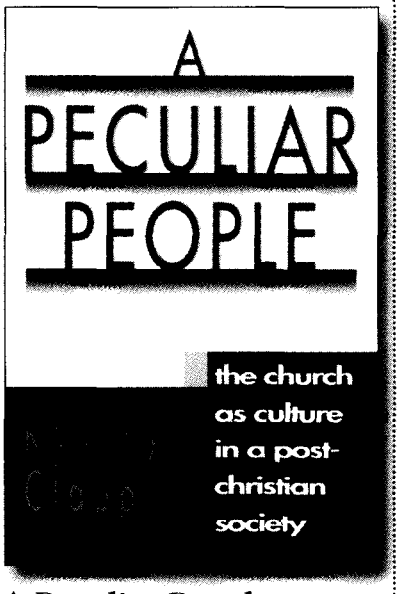

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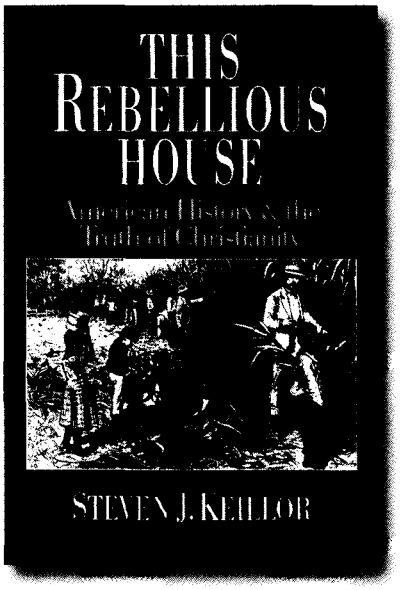

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be to miss how much there is to be learned from keeping company with him, but, nonetheless, he may be convicted out of his own mouth. The letters of St. Paul in the New Testament are a constant reminder that in its present pilgrim condition the Church exists only as a community of justified sinners gathered under the cross.

The life that we live by faith in the Son of God is still a life "in the flesh" (Galatians 2:20). The *saints* at Corinth, themselves very far from embodying the practices of perfection, are nonetheless those to whom God has given the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57). And, perhaps most strikingly, in Philippians, after Paul writes of himself as in many ways having embodied the practices of perfection and of having reason for confidence in the flesh, he continues, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. . . . Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (3:7-12).

None of this, of course, is meant by Paul as an invitation to take the cost of discipleship with anything less than full seriousness. It is precisely because "we are justified by faith" and "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" that we know "that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Romans 5:1, 3-4).

Such passages suggest that Hauerwas cannot so easily brand "the polemics of the Reformation centered around the alternatives of grace and law" as "distinctly a side issue." These themes—however difficult to understand rightly—are very near the center of the Christian life and Christian care of souls. Hauerwas will be in good company if he does not dismiss them too quickly. To attend with care to such themes need not in the slightest degree undercut his own polemic against a theology that becomes simply an academic discipline separated from the life of the church. Rather, it is precisely a theology that pays attention to the Church here and now, and to the gospel by which the Church is constituted and continually reconstituted, that will not be able to avoid the centrality of grace in the life of the Church and the in-

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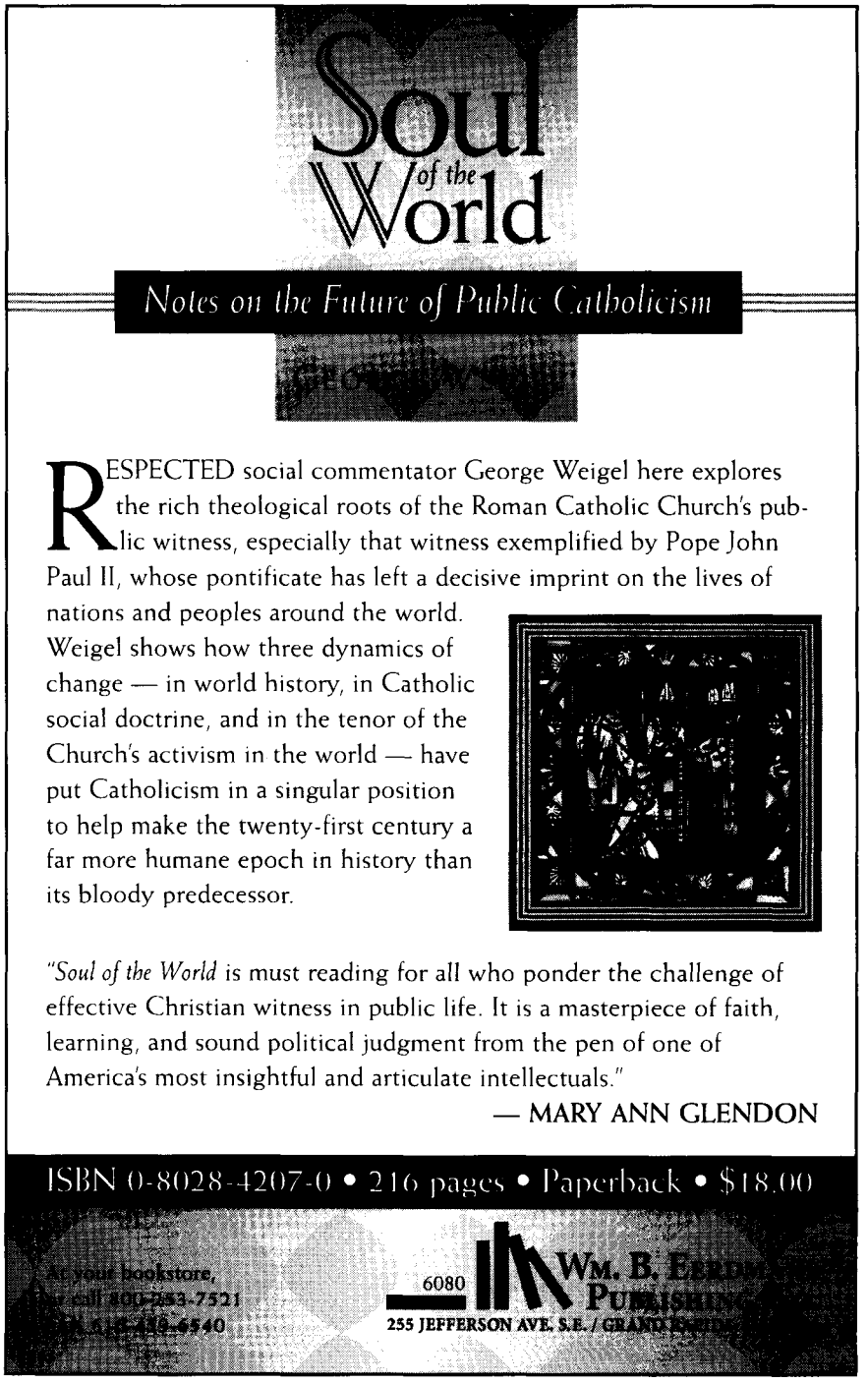
dividual Christian. Perhaps Hauerwas does not mean to disagree. But if so, I wish he would cease to dismiss the language of justification and pay heed to the many Christians who, conscious of their failures as disciples, cannot hear in a description of a Church that embodies the practices of perfection a word that renews and enlivens—that draws them more fully and deeply into those practices by covering them with the perfection of Christ.

This puts a little different spin upon what it might mean to be "in good company" in the Church. We need not deny Hauerwas' oft-repeated claim that the Church *is* a social ethic or the claim of this volume that we need a "theological politics" that understands the Church as an alternative to every other *polis* or *civitas*. But everything depends on what we find most striking in the alternative. What strikes me about the Church is not so much that it embodies the practices of perfection as that it is the gathering of forgiven sinners. If this church provides an alternative life by whose light we can criticize all other communities, that is because it has nothing in itself of which to boast.

A CONTINUING THEME of the essays in this volume is that, despite their emphasis upon the Church and the *ecclesial* location of Christian ethics, Hauerwas himself feels the lack of an ecclesial home. Certain individuals provide good company along the path of Christian life. A few local congregations also provide such company. But he notes that his views are "too 'homeless' to represent 'a church.'" This leaves him in the rather disconcerting position—at least for one who opposes the voluntary church and freedom of religion—of "picking and choosing parts of traditions I like without having to bear the burden of the parts . . . I do not like."

I suggest that the antidote to this, paradoxically enough, is a renewed understanding of the Church as, first and foremost, a community of forgiven sinners gathered under the cross. Not a community that embodies the practices of perfection or that is simply separate from the world, but a body of believers who still live "in the flesh," who are still part of the world, suffering the transformations effected by God's grace on its pilgrim way. In such a church even those struggling for perfection can find a home—though, of course, one that keeps them always "on the way" as hopeful sojourners.

None of this is meant to deny that Hauerwas rightly diagnoses some of the problems faced by Christians in America. He does, and it is an understatement by far to say that many have learned from and been influenced by his diagnosis. It has been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given to him to be a deeply influential thinker even within the academy he sometimes scorns. But he said we should tell him what we want left out and why. That I have been attempting. For the diagnosis, on target as it sometimes can be, is by now pretty well known.

Strange as it may seem to say of one who is known for his attempt to reclaim ethics as a *theological* discipline, what we need from Hauerwas now is more theology. At several points in this collection he offers a telling and perceptive suggestion about why papal encyclicals are often rather boring to read. In the encyclical letters the Church is seen as exercising something like a universal teaching office—enunciating basic truths for all people. Inevitably therefore, Hauerwas suggests, the encyclicals are rather abstract and general, even "platitudinous and irrelevant for policy decision."

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HAUERWAS must watch the company he keeps lest he fall into a similar trap. Strange as this may sound when said of his work, one is sometimes uncertain whether the dominant intellectual influences are really those of the theological tradition. In part, of course, this is only because he reads almost everything, but this volume articulates a rather abstract analysis that seldom enters into specifics.

I would like him to leave that out from now on. And instead, I would like him to develop in more detail his defense of vegetarianism, or his claim that we can and should return to the concept of a just wage, or the assertion that we do not need to attribute any great significance to our work. I would like some help in thinking through my own participation in a modern economy. Broadsides are useful up to a point, but they remain abstract and generalized. Shall I be like the Oberlin student who at commencement rode his bicycle in the academic procession in order to symbolize his opposition to the internal combustion engine?

More than all this, however, I would like to see him begin to draw less directly on our contemporaries and more directly on older Christian thinkers for whom practical questions were never divorced from theology. I don't, of course, suppose that even Hauerwas has time and energy to give us detailed help on all these matters. But I have been keeping company with him for a long time, and it has been good company, at least for me. In a peculiar way, however, he has focused so intensively on theological method—while making his case against method—that the case has become an abstract and general one, aimed at anyone and everyone.

It would be a great gift—not just to me, which hardly counts, but to the Body of Christ—if he were now to leave out the method and simply return to questions of substance. As Michael Oakeshott once put it, "Not the cry, but the rising of the wild duck impels the flock to follow him in flight."

A Life Beyond Repair

JERZY KOSINSKI: A BIOGRAPHY. By JAMES PARK SLOAN. *Dutton. 505 pp. $27.95.*

***Reviewed by* D. G. Myers**

SINCE HIS SUICIDE in 1991, the literary reputation of Jerzy Kosinski has continued to sink. At one time he was one of the most promising writers on the American scene, pounding out three hits in a row—the cult classic *The Painted Bird, Steps* (winner of the 1969 National Book Award), and *Being There* (filmed in 1980 with Peter Sellers in the starring role). With their grisly violence and a sexuality bordering upon the sadomasochistic, the books raised Kosinski into the ranks of America's celebrity class. He appeared repeatedly on *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson, played the role of Lenin's stooge Grigory Zinoviev in Warren Beatty's film *Reds,* posed for the cover of the *New York Times Magazine,* and presented the Oscar for screenwriting in the spring of 1982, watched by 600 million people.

Even as his star was ascending, however, Kosinski was all but finished as a writer. His last six books became progressively more trivial, self-absorbed, and unreadable; and there drew closer the day of his exposure as a literary fraud. In June 1982, the *Village Voice* revealed that Kosinski (for whom English was a second language) had made extensive use of translators and collaborators to write all his books, and then had concealed the fact. George Reavey, a poet who was embittered by his own lack of literary success, complained to anyone who would listen that *he* wrote *The Painted Bird.* But Reavey was only one of several who could have made the same complaint, and not only about *The Painted Bird. Being There* so closely resembled a prewar Polish bestseller called *The Career of Nikodem Dyzma* as to deserve the charge of

D.G. MYERS *is Associate Professor of English at Texas A&M University and the author of* The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880.

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plagiarism. Kosinski never fully recovered from the *Voice*'s exposé. The remainder of his life, as he himself said, was spent running from it.

A fitting end, some might say, to a literary life that was built upon lies. For years Kosinski passed off *The Painted Bird* as the true story of his own experience during the Holocaust. Long before writing it he regaled friends and dinner parties with macabre tales of a childhood spent in hiding among the Polish peasantry. Among those who were fascinated was Dorothy de Santillana, a senior editor at Houghton Mifflin, to whom Kosinski confided that he had a manuscript based on his experiences. Upon accepting the book for publication Santillana said, "It is my understanding that, fictional as the material may sound, it is straight autobiography." Although he backed away from this claim, Kosinski never wholly disavowed it. He described the book as an "auto-fiction," explaining that it "draws upon a childhood spent, by the casual chances of war, in the remotest villages of Eastern Europe." Although it is not "easily justified," he said, it is nonetheless "convenient" to classify *The Painted Bird* as nonfiction.

And so it was widely received. Reviewing the book for the *New York Times Book Review*, Elie Wiesel said, "It is as a chronicle that *The Painted Bird* . . . achieves its unusual power." Other critics described it as "semi-autobiographical" or a "testament," praising its historical value. As late as 1976, in a preface to the second edition, Kosinski continued to prevaricate. He never said outright that the book was not an autobiography. The reason he rejected the label, he said, was that he did not wish to be cast "in the role of spokesman for my generation, especially for those who survived the war." Even so, anyone who "bothered to refer to actual source materials" would find that he "was not overstating the brutality and cruelty that characterized the war years in Eastern Europe." He even quoted a death camp commandant to establish that the theme of his book was true to the experience of all Jewish children under the Nazis: "The rule was to kill children right away." And then he repeated the story he had told so many times before: to save him, his own parents had sent him away to live among strangers, just like the unnamed boy in *The Painted Bird*.

The trouble is, it wasn't true. And yet the truth about Jerzy Kosinski, as set forth in this new biography by James Park Sloan, may be even more fascinating. For though he disclaimed the role of spokesman for his generation, he was representative of it in many ways. A creature of postmodernity, he suffered—and celebrated—some of the most destructive pathologies of the age. It was as if he were hellbent on acting out the rupture in human values caused by the Holocaust. That was the central theme of his novels, and of his own life.

Born five months after Hitler came to power, he was the only child of Moses and Elzbieta Lewinkopf, a Jewish couple living in Lodz, Poland. His father changed their name to Kosinski—a more Polish-sounding name—in 1939 when he moved the family 120 miles away to the eastern border of German-held Poland. Far from giving up his son to the care of someone else, Moses Kosinski took in and eventually adopted the son of another Jewish family in the region. Here the family waited out the war, passing as Gentiles. Jerzy was carefully instructed to deny he was Jewish if challenged. It was a lesson that took a lifetime to unlearn. After the war, Moses Kosinski threw in with the "reds" against the "white" Polish loyalists, and when the Soviets took control, he was rewarded with a party appointment. For Jerzy his father's position meant a superficially trouble-free postwar existence: high school, photography, girl friends, jazz, café society, student-exchange trips to Russia, and the University of Lodz.

Unlike his father, however, he despised communism. Sloan ascribes it to personality—Kosinski disliked conformity, he says—but in reality his anticommunism seems to have been principled enough. His intellectual mentor, the sociologist Jozef Chalasinski, was a dissident who believed that Marxist orthodoxy was destroying any possibility of a Marxist humanism. Seeing that human values would never be restored to Poland as long as the Communists were in power, Kosinski left the country for the United States in 1959. He did not return for nearly twenty years.

His first two books were contributions to the literature of anticommunism. *The Future Is Ours, Comrade* (1960) and *No Third Path* (1962) were published under the pseudonym "Joseph Novak." Inside accounts of the harshness of life under the Soviets, they were based on Kosinski's own visits to Russia. Although he tries to make a case for behind-the-scenes CIA sponsorship of the books, Sloan has no hard information and is not to be trusted on this score: for him, anyone who is anticommunist simply must be a

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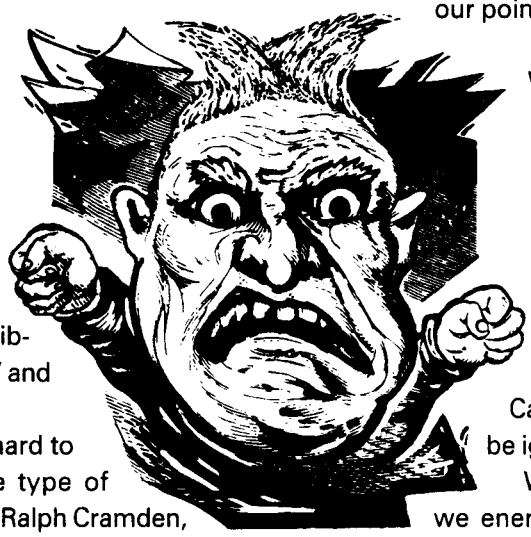

Commonweal, straining hard to be satirical, asserted that the type of people who write for us include Ralph Cramden, Betty Crocker, and of course Rip Van Winkle; that *Road & Track* has named us "one of the ten top minivans in the American market"; and that "if the pope told Catholics they could only have sex standing on their heads every Tuesday," we'd "look forward to Tuesdays." Gads, is *Commonweal* suffering from dizzy spells, about to have a stroke?

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"John Bircher"; the only reason he can imagine for writing an anticommunist book is to further "propaganda efforts directed at the Soviets" while tricking Americans into "accepting high levels of funding for defense and intelligence spending."

SLOAN IS GENERALLY helpless in dealing with ideas. A novelist and teacher of creative writing, he belongs to the vaguely leftist culture of American universities, and treats all writing as more or less fiction. Kosinski, by contrast, was a sharp-minded and lifelong man of the right. Although *The Painted Bird* made him popular with young readers, he scorned the student movement of the sixties. From firsthand experience he knew the falseness of the promise of "liberation."

And yet he also yielded to its allure. Despite his contempt for the political ideas of the young and their so-called "counterculture," Kosinski was an enthusiastic participant in the sexual revolution of the sixties and after. One of the most troubling features of the biography that Sloan has written is its attention to Kosinski's sexual life, which is recounted in detail. To be indelicate, when in the film version of *Being There* Chance the Gardener (Peter Sellers) tells EE (Shirley MacLaine), "I like to watch"—provoking an infamous solo performance by MacLaine—he is not speaking for Chance alone. Kosinski frequented the sex clubs like Plato's Retreat that flourished in Manhattan before the outbreak of AIDS, usually in the company of an attractive young woman not his wife. Married twice—to the eighteen-years-older steel heiress Mary Weir and to a descendant of Bavarian aristocracy named Katherina von Fraunhofer—he was spectacularly unfaithful. He sought out three-way sex (two men and a woman); he procured lovers for (and copulated in the presence of) his stepson. He duped one young woman into bed by claiming that he had no penis, and then nearly raped her.

What was the reason for this sexual adventurism? Sloan sets it down to a love of "sexual theater" that mirrored Kosinski's compulsive need to lie and feign and pose in all areas of his life, compensating for "the hollowness at the core of his being." This theory explains much: the reckless driving, the abuse of small dogs, the thirst for fame, the fabrication of personal experience, the secretiveness about how he wrote, the denial of his Jewish identity. "There was a hollow space at the center of Kosinski that had resulted from denying his past," Sloan writes, "and his whole life had become a race to fill in that hollow space before it caused him to implode, collapsing inward upon himself like a burnt-out star." On this theory, Kosinski emerges as a classic borderline personality, frantically defending himself against intense feelings of hopelessness and abandonment. He even appears somewhat heroic, because he restrained himself from crossing the border into all-out psychosis.

WHAT THIS THEORY cannot explain, however, is Kosinski's strong moral opposition to communism and persistent loyalty to political freedom. Naturally, his biographer would like to dismiss Kosinski's political convictions as yet another compulsion. "If he had any deeply ingrained ideology of his own," Sloan writes, "it was a sort of paranoid anarchism, with special emphasis on the plight of unusual and gifted individuals within 'collectivities.'" The evidence is otherwise. After the collapse of Soviet hegemony in Central Europe, Kosinski spearheaded the organization of AmerBank, the first western bank to be chartered in Poland. Friends worried that his best energies were being siphoned off into nonliterary projects, but Kosinski was committed to bringing capitalism and economic freedom to his homeland. Hardly the act of a paranoid anarchist.

Nor can the psychological theory account for the haunting power of Kosinski's one great book—*The Painted Bird.* Strictly speaking, it is not a Holocaust book. Like the Vilna ghetto poet Abraham Sutzkever, Kosinski rarely mentions the German exterminators; but unlike Sutzkever (who reserves speech for the Jewish dead), Kosinski aims to exhibit the cruelty and backwardness of the Polish peasants among whom his six-year-old narrator, who is indifferently Jewish or Gypsy, must hide. The one passage in which the Holocaust is discussed ("Perhaps the world would soon become one vast incinerator for burning people") is immediately followed by a longer scene in which the rape of a Jewish girl is described in brutal and excrutiating detail. *The Painted Bird* is notorious for its horrors: eyeballs are gouged out of sockets, animals are tortured, women are violated with bottles holding manure, men are devoured by rats. "The Germans puzzled me," the boy says. "Was such a destitute, cruel world worth ruling?"

This is the question that Kosinski's whole life was given over to answering. That he died by his own hand suggests that his answer, finally, was No. And so Kosinski joined a line of Holocaust writers—Tadeusz Borowski, Jean Améry, Paul Celan, Primo Levi—who by committing suicide

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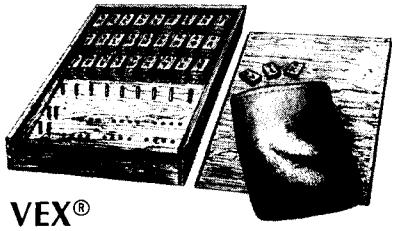

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testified that the world was beyond repair. Although *The Painted Bird* may not be directly about the Holocaust, although it may not be based on Kosinski's own experiences during the Holocaust, it is nevertheless an indispensable document of the Holocaust. It is perhaps the greatest example of what is coming to be known as a "second-generation" book: a contemporary report of the hell in which a survivor of the Holocaust must live, one generation after the event.

Beyond the Therapeutic State

IT'S ALL THE RAGE: CRIME AND CULTURE. By WENDY KAMINER. *Addison-Wesley. 292 pp. $22.*

***Reviewed by* J. Daryl Charles**

"I FEEL," wrote Freud, "that the irrational forces in man's nature are so strong that the rational forces have little chance of success against them." Thus, for human beings, one's neighbor is "not only a potential helper and sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and kill him."

Although the penetration of Freudian and sub-Freudian psychotherapy into our culture's moral mindset was carefully observed three decades ago by Philip Rieff, only now are we witnessing the full fury of its effects on the criminal justice system. For better or worse, the distinction between law and therapy—or the collapse of the distinction—profoundly affects our notions of criminal justice. How do the $300 billion spent annually on mental health services and the $150 billion spent on litigation insurance affect our cultural understanding of law and justice? Should society distinguish between justice and therapy? What is the relationship between guilt and a defendant's personal history of victimization, particularly in homicide cases? Should justice and punishment always, sometimes, or never be proportional? And who can be trusted to answer these questions?

J. DARYL CHARLES *is currently an Affiliate Fellow of the Center for the Study of American Religion at Princeton University and is author of* Virtue Amidst Vice *(Sheffield Academic Press, forthcoming).*

HISTORICALLY, religious faith and theological conviction have undergirded our understanding of justice and law. Notions of justice have been traditionally rooted in divine law (revelation) working in concert with natural law theory (reason). Such norms, however, can no longer be invoked, as America's public philosophy of choice has shifted from moral-theological to political-pragmatic. The author of *It's All the Rage: Crime and Culture* does not claim to be a person of faith. Yet much of the penetrating insight, biting wit, and much-needed common sense on display in Wendy Kaminer's recent bestseller *I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional* spills over to *Rage*. Engaging the reader at every point along the way, Kaminer has a knack for asking the right questions in her critique of contemporary legal culture. Indeed, she poses the sort of questions that should be raised by people who profess faith yet who are all too often reticent to plumb the theological implications of their belief systems.

Kaminer's book comes at a time when Americans are discovering themselves to be one big (un)happy family of adult children. The author began writing *Rage* at the time we were being entertained by court jesters Lorena Bobbitt ("Let the healing begin") and the Brothers Menendez ("It was only a preemptive strike"), both of which cases illustrated the degree to which claims to vic-

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timization and therapeutic defense have transformed "criminal justice." The question of Tonya Harding's complicity in the Nancy Kerrigan mugging ("I know I've let you down, but I've also let myself down")—a tale generously laden with glimpses of Harding's childhood and marital abuse—was also front-page news at the time. And yes, notes Kaminer, the "Free the Juice" campaign was already up and running, following the heart-rending confession by O. J. in his pseudo-suicide note, "At times I've felt like a battered husband." (Although there is no mention of it in the book, it was also about this time that double felon Kathleen Powers, a fugitive of the law for twenty-plus years, stunned the nation by turning herself over to the authorities with the announcement that "I have finally learned to forgive myself." Powers, it will be remembered, was an accomplice in a bank robbery and fatal shooting of a Boston policeman in the early seventies—but more significantly by her account, a victim of "revolutionary idealism."

Motivation for writing this book stems from the author's own attempts at wrestling with objective legal standards, which she thinks are inconsistently applied throughout the legal system. Her own brief tenure as a public defender in the Brooklyn criminal courts tended to confirm her suspicion that the system can't even prosecute larcenies sensibly, much less adjudicate capital felonies.

Kaminer was most struck by the contradictions between lenient standards of personal responsibility fueled in no small measure by the recovery movement (which has taught us that everyone is a hapless victim of a dysfunctional family) on the one hand, and the reputed harshness of punishment advocated for certain categories of crime on the other. While people are increasingly frustrated with Twinkie defenses and bleeding-heart liberals who argue for leniency based on childhood trauma, millions of Americans meanwhile are refusing to take responsibility for their own bad behavior, caught up in the collective whine of addictive and abusive culture. Something's indeed wrong with this picture.

Kaminer's own confession is refreshingly honest, if not very optimistic:

> I have no faith in metasolutions to crime or the crisis in criminal justice and have not attempted to offer any. . . . My own goal is not to solve problems but to rationalize our discussion of them. . . . Debates about crime are rarely sensible. They're ruled by politics and fear and the mindless exchange of attitudes that dominates the worst talk shows. . . . I expect that we'll proudly become even less rational as the millennium approaches: more people will report being visited by aliens or abused by Satanic cults in childhood or graced by their guardian angels. In my worst moments, I imagine that this book would be taken more seriously by a broader audience if I claimed to be channeling the spirit of a two-thousand-year-old shaman or an extraterrestrial. . . . But God doesn't talk to me. This is not a book of revelation.

In some respects, *Rage* is a logical extension of *I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional,* in which late-twentieth-century "psychological man" is both clearly and comically scrutinized. Kaminer possesses that rare combination of wit, candor, and common sense that makes her a pleasure to read regardless of one's political disposition. She confronts rather than evades the tough issues, while handling statistics judiciously (in stark contrast to many criminologists, whose cardinal sin is their often feckless and blatantly ideological use of numbers). Moreover, Kaminer's own assessment of the justice system's bankruptcy, while not comic, is more than academic, born out of her personal experience with the system.

Yet, the very strength of this book is the place of its greatest weakness. Despite her ability to raise disturbing questions, in the end Kaminer leaves them tantalizingly unanswered. What is a society's measure of justice? Is punishment moral? Is justice rehabilitative rather than retributive? Should justice be proportional? By whose standards will justice be defined—and then implemented? And why are almost all moral issues lawyerly issues?

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Kaminer's inability to address the philosophical basis for justice is reflected in the book's treatment of the role of religion in criminal justice theory and practice, to which a total of seven pages is devoted. Here, Kaminer opts for less than satisfying stereotypes rather than acknowledging that one's approach to criminal justice is a reflection of one's view of human nature, and thus, one's worldview.

For example, the position that capital punishment (in cases of premeditated murder) is a moral necessity and obligation of the civil authorities based on their divine commission to preserve the social order—a position affirmed by the Church throughout its history until the mid-twentieth century—is treated by the author as only the stuff of redneck demagoguery. Unhappily, transcendent norms for justice do not find their way into Kaminer's discussion of law and morality.

The concluding chapter of the book, "Virtue Talk," simultaneously illustrates Kaminer's deftness at critiquing the inconsistencies of contemporary moral discourse on the one hand and her inattention to the foundations of moral judgment on the other. Kaminer is rightly entitled to a bit of skepticism regarding the "new national pastime" of virtue-talk. After all, conservatives and liberals alike have learned to play the game—from the more serious-minded, such as William Bennett and Stephen Carter, to the less so, for example, Bill and Hillary Clinton. Indeed "virtue ethics," as Russell Hittinger has cautioned, should be approached with a certain reserve, since it can be used as a substitute for making moral choices.

WHILE KAMINER IS well aware that American society lacks a consensus as to the nature and origin of virtue, her disinclination toward religion prevents her from discovering where a consensus—rooted in intergenerational wisdom—might reside. Which brings us back to our fundamental dilemma of defining and implementing justice. At the present there exists no consensual understanding of justice in our body politic—of guilt and innocence, good and evil. Defining that point at which innocence is outweighed by guilt is the burden of the criminal justice system. For the system to be able to function in a way that preserves the social order, a transcendent norm for justice must be affirmed.

The alternative is to subject justice to the private whims and fancies that propel the therapeutic state. As a means of social control, the therapeutic state functions separately from law and criminal justice in that no binding laws, precepts, or standards can be invoked. Like the former treasurer of the Episcopal Church who embezzled $2.2 million and blamed her actions on a psychiatric "breakdown" caused by "workplace stress" and "the pain, abuse, and powerlessness I have felt," no one bears moral responsibility. Whether for speeding or strangulation, blame falls not on sin or evil, but on cultural psychosis. At that point, justice means whoever screams the loudest.

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THE QUEST FOR GOD: A PERSONAL PILGRIMAGE. By PAUL JOHNSON. *HarperCollins. 216 pp. $24.*

***Reviewed by* Roger Kimball**

I SUSPECT THAT most readers will be at least distantly familiar with the British historian and journalist Paul Johnson. Not only is he an amazingly prolific journalist, writing week in and week out on any number of topics for any number of journals and newspapers both here and in England, but he has also managed to produce a long shelf of books that combine readability with critical acumen and panoramic learning.

Among his best-known works are *A History of the Jews*, *A History of Christianity*, and *Intellectuals*, the last an anatomy of spiritual and moral obtuseness in intellectuals from Rousseau and Shelley to Sartre, Bertrand Russell, and Lillian Hellman. Perhaps his greatest works are *The Birth of the Modern: World Society 1815-1830* (1991) and *Modern Times: From the Twenties to the Nineties*, the first edition of which was published in 1983. Each is a complex book of some thousand pages, yet each zipped through numerous printings and became a popular success.

One reason for Johnson's success as a popular historian is that, unlike many academic historians today, he understands that history, if it is to be compelling, must present past events as an unfolding human drama: it must, in other words, tell a story, and one with a moral. Johnson is an accomplished storyteller, having early on perfected the knack of distilling whole libraries of fact into coherent narratives that delight as they instruct.

A second reason for his success, especially as a journalist, is his formidable skill as a conservative polemicist. Johnson is not one to suffer fools gladly—nor charlatans,

ROGER KIMBALL *is Managing Editor of the* New Criterion.

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knaves, or mountebanks. He is a man of strong political, artistic, and moral convictions—convictions that are often decidedly at odds with received opinion in academia and in the media—and he is not shy about defending them. He has, for example, been a staunch supporter of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan; more recently, he has emerged as a powerful critic of political correctness and radical multiculturalism, evils that are beginning to blight English society just as they have deformed ours.

A third reason for Johnson's success, I believe, is the underlying moral seriousness that informs his work. Johnson does not preach. He is not moralistic. But he does write out of deep conviction, which is grounded in his lifelong faith as a Roman Catholic. Even when he is at his most entertaining, this underlying gravitas communicates itself to his readers, inviting them, too, to ponder the spectacle of human folly and wisdom that Johnson conjures from the pages of history and the hurly-burly of contemporary social and political life.

IN TONE, his new book, *The Quest for God*, is very different from most of his earlier work. Johnson the polemicist, Johnson the controversialist, is nowhere to be seen. As its subtitle suggests, this is a very personal book: quieter, gentler, more tentative than his work as an historian and journalist. He describes the book as neither "a manual of religious instruction" nor "an attempt to proselytize" but "a series of meditations on religious subjects, by one who has imperfect knowledge and often ill-defined beliefs, but who has an absolutely genuine anxiety to explore the truth and convey it." The "personal pilgrimage" he embarks upon yields not a series of answers but a sustained reflection on a number of basic religious questions.

If the tone of *The Quest for God* is not characteristically Johnsonian, however, the theme of the book has clearly been percolating for some time in the author's mind. At the end of the first chapter of *Modern Times*, Johnson quotes Friedrich Nietzsche's infamous proclamation that "God is dead" and that "belief in the Christian God is no longer tenable." Noting the "huge vacuum" that this collapse of religious belief would leave, he somberly observed that "the history of modern times is in great part the history of how that vacuum [has] been filled." By the time he published a revised edition of *Modern Times*, in 1991, Johnson had become more optimistic about the fate of religion. In "The Recovery of Freedom," the new concluding chapter he supplied for that edition, he wrote that "What is important in history is not only the events that occur but the events that obstinately do not occur. The outstanding event of modern times was the failure of religious belief to disappear."

This failure—what from another perspective must be accounted an important triumph—provides Johnson with the starting point for his inquiry. A century or more after such prophets of atheism as Darwin, Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche confidentally proclaimed the death of God, religious belief continues to thrive in most parts of the world. "From the perspective of human spirituality," Johnson writes, "the most extraordinary thing about the twentieth century was the failure of God to die."

To be sure, the modern world has seen the proliferation of many rivals to religious belief, from communism and fascism to such currently fashionable talismans as "race politics, sexual politics, environmental politics, health politics," and other instances of what Johnson calls the "Promethean spirit." ("The road to hell," he notes, "is paved by self-apotheosis.")

But all the predictions that religion would gradually disappear as human society became more "enlightened" have turned out to be grossly mistaken. The vast majority of men and women, as Johnson notes, are "believers or agnostics—and agnosticism has every degree of doubt and bewilderment, ranging

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from near belief to total confusion." What we might call hard-core atheism seems to flourish mostly among certain intellectual elites. George Orwell once observed of some absurdity that one would have to be an intellectual to believe a thing like that; perhaps the same goes for certain forms of militant disbelief.

In the sixteen brief chapters that compose *The Quest for God,* Johnson rehearses a wide range of classic religious quandaries, from the question of whether God exists to the problem of reconciling the idea of a just and all-powerful God with the existence of evil and innocent suffering. His main purpose, however, is not theological speculation but existential reflection.

> The existence or nonexistence of God is the most important question we humans are ever called to answer. If God does exist, and if in consequence we are called to another life when this one ends, a momentous set of consequences follows. . . . Our life then becomes a mere preparation for eternity and must be conducted throughout with our future in view.

Of course, the existence of God cannot convincingly be proved in any normal sense of the word "prove." But that does not mean that God's presence is utterly undiscernable. To a large extent, *The Quest for God* is the record of one man's effort to trace the tokens of God's presence, both in the world at large and in the recesses of his own conscience. Johnson is particularly eloquent on what used to be called the cosmological argument for God's existence: the ways in which order and beauty point beyond themselves to a divine artificer.

There are one or two surprises in this book. In a chapter called "He, She, or It: Divinity, Gender, and Sex," Johnson advocates the ordination of women, writing that "I believe I shall live to see women priests in the Catholic Church, and my grandchildren may well live to see the first

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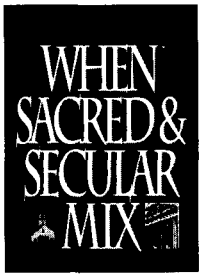

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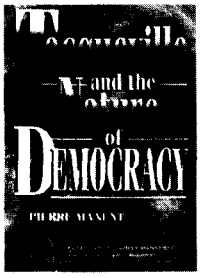

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woman pope."

Be that as it may, *The Quest for God* for the most part eschews political controversy. Apart from an occasional digression, its main focus is on what Johnson calls the two most important questions facing mankind: Does God exist? And what is our fate after death? There is an important sense in which the chief lesson of religion is, as Reinhold Niebuhr put it, to teach us to be failures. Time's inexorable ravages doom all human and material accomplishments to oblivion. If the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, as the Bible tells us, a reflection on the ineluctable deprivations of time is a goad to religious awakening. "Without God," Johnson writes, "death is horrific." The Christian religion proposes to redeem the works of time by placing them *sub specie aeternitatis.*

Although the dominant tone of *The Quest for God* is affirmative, there is a sharp undercurrent of concern about the spiritual and moral fate of Western society. For if religious belief flourishes today, so too does moral relativism, which Johnson rightly calls "the cardinal sin of the twentieth century." Together with the "Promethean spirit" that fuels modernity, moral relativism poses grave threats to the spiritual substance and integrity of our society. The increasingly widespread practice of abortion and euthanasia, for example, confront us with moral enormities that are no less egregious for being commonplace. Indeed, the fact that we have rapidly become inured to practices that even a couple of decades ago would have routinely sparked outrage is a reminder of how fragile our moral commitments can be. The prospect of ever-increasing technological intervention into the processes of life promises not only great medical advances but, as Johnson cautions, great temptations. He is right to look with uneasiness on the challenges to human dignity that will surely be forthcoming from "the innovators who plan to use the new technologies to 'improve' the human condition." If he nevertheless remains hopeful, it is partly because of his conviction that although "you may not believe in God, . . . that does not prevent God from believing in you."

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE FRAGILITY OF FREEDOM: TOCQUEVILLE ON RELIGION, DEMOCRACY, AND THE AMERICAN FUTURE. By JOSHUA MITCHELL. *University of Chicago Press. 264 pp. $34.95.*

It is Tocqueville's hour—again. Recently, the editor of a leading journal of opinion quipped that his magazine would soon be known as the Newsletter of the Tocqueville Marching and Chowder Society, so often was the French sage's name now appearing in his pages. But there are ample reasons for the renewed enthusiasm, particularly at a time when the repair of so many of our local or nongovernmental institutions stands at the top of the nation's agenda. Joshua Mitchell ably places *Democracy in America* in the long conversation of Western political and theological thought, while arguing that Tocqueville's insights are peculiarly applicable to the present moment. Tocqueville was prescient in emphasizing that only the mediating institutions of religion, family, and civil society can combat the pathologies to which American democracy is prone. Along with that insight, though, came a recognition that only the diffusion of power can enable us to manage "the relationship between particularity and universality" in such a manner that "each is granted its due." Partisans of federally mandated "diversity" should take note.

—*Wilfred M. McClay*

MORAL ACTION AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS. By JEAN PORTER. *Cambridge University Press. 235 pp. $54.95.*

This important book shows that much contemporary ethical debate is wrongheaded. In a bold recasting of Christian ethics, Jean Porter urges us to abandon the false alternatives of deontological (Kantian) vs. consequentialist (utilitarian) morality, and

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learn from modern moral philosophy that moral rules require judgment. In difficult cases one asks not (for instance) whether the rule against murder has exceptions but whether *this kind of case* counts as murder—a question of analogical judgment. Porter, whose earlier *The Recovery of Virtue* bore the subtitle, "The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics," here provides a brilliant synopsis of St. Thomas. Virtues, she argues, are not an alternative to rule-based ethics, but an integral part of a rational account of morality. Recasting the virtues to take into account contemporary understanding of psychological development, she enters into conversation with feminists, narrative ethicists like MacIntyre and Hauerwas, and epistemologists like Wittgenstein and Anscombe. Jean Porter has written a major modern book whose hero remains (no surprise to those who know him, or her), St. Thomas Aquinas.

— *Victor L. Austin*

Science, Jews, and Secular Culture. By David A. Hollinger. *Princeton University Press. 178 pp. $24.95.*

This short and eclectic collection of essays and lectures is weakly tied together by the argument—central in some chapters, marginal in others—that science was a powerful tool in the secularization of American culture. The important essay entitled "Jewish Intellectuals and the De-Christianization of American Culture in the Twentieth Century" holds that the old Protestant cultural hegemony was defeated in no small part by the growing number of Jews championing "a secular vision of American culture" in the "American academic and literary intelligentsia" and in the best and most influential universities. They, and many allies from John Dewey to James B. Conant, posited science as the modern substitute for religion as the proper source of values and culture. To this achievement Hollinger is broadly sympathetic, and for him the harder question is, "Why is there so much Christianity in the United States in the twentieth century?" As a historian Hollinger is reliable and perceptive, but his brief political comments—whether pointing to Protestant "resentment," or entirely dismissing complaints about the current "privatization" of religion, or suggesting that feminism has advanced in the academy because it "is generating a number of exciting new research programs"—are disappointingly reflective of liberal dogma.

— *Elliott Abrams*

Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture. By Colleen McDannell. *Yale University Press. 312 pp. $35.*

The use—and the buying and selling—of religious artifacts illustrates the integration of religious life and everyday life. Popular use of religious objects, the author argues, is not the result of "ignorance, superficial commercialism, status competition," or institutional manipulation. McDannell traces the art and fashion of piety through the use of the Bible in Victorian homes, religious symbolism in Laurel Hill Cemetery, Lourdes water in healing, Mormon sacred clothing, and the rise of Christian manufacturing and retailing. Somewhat redundant—and with perhaps unavoidable generalizing about "the Catholic imagination," "a Protestant landscape," "working-class aesthetics," and "middle-class notions of taste"—this study argues persuasively that "distinct categories of sacred and profane are inadequate to capture the complexity of Christian practice" in the corporeal world.

— *Camille S. Williams*

The Birth of Liberal Guilt in the English Novel: Charles Dickens to H. G. Wells. By Daniel Born. *University of North Carolina Press. 213 pp. $39.95 cloth, $16.95 paper.*

This study explores the formative years of the cultural sensibility called "liberal guilt" in works by Dickens, Eliot, Gissing, Conrad, Forster, and Wells. Born takes literature seriously and writes lucidly, though he is to a great extent enmeshed in the critical paralysis of modern literary liberalism: desiring "good" while rejecting a transcendent Good. In making clear the continuation of the "Enlightenment project" through the Romantic generation and into the Victorian era, particularly its corrosive skepticism and criticism of institutions, Born

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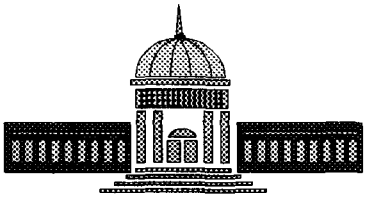
inadvertently exposes the futility of moral and material progress in the absence of a transcendent standard. His analysis of H. G. Wells' *Tono-Bungay*, with its references to Richard Rorty and other postmodernists, particularly illuminates this dead end. It might have been instructive had Born plumbed "guilt" itself in more detail, particularly the extent to which "liberal guilt" is really *guilt* and not merely a refashioning of moral categories for the weak-spined.

— *Elizabeth Powers*

THE STRUGGLE FOR THEOLOGY'S SOUL: CONTESTING SCRIPTURE IN CHRISTOLOGY. By WILLIAM M. THOMPSON. *Crossroad. 310 pp. $39.95.*

A welcome case for the unity of theology and Scripture—a unity largely present in theology before the late middle ages and largely absent from more recent scholarship and preaching. Thompson explores the Psalms, the Synoptic Gospels as well as John, the Wisdom literature, the current debate over the "astonishing exchange" in Christ, and the image of the child in Scripture and modern spirituality. But informing the whole is the image of Scripture as a painting, with Jesus the incarnate Word as the "ground" against the "background" of the triune God, and the Church and cosmos in the "foreground." Thompson contests the dominant modes of doing theology and studying Scripture with a rare generosity that transforms "the struggle" into a meditative style. There are clearly things to contest in Thompson's views *about* Scripture here—but his *use of* Scripture in communion with the tradition will be a model for all those who understand the importance of his struggle.

— *James J. Buckley*



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FINDING GOD AT HARVARD: SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS OF THINKING CHRISTIANS. Edited by KELLY MONROE. *HarperCollins. 368 pp. $17.95.*

The secular university's intolerance of the life of faith is a recurring topic of public discussion. It is a discussion, however, often conducted in the language of the academy, and not in the language of the believer. *Finding God at Harvard* changes that. A collection of eloquent essays by current and former faculty and students of Harvard, its contributors give personal testimony of a faith retained, deepened, or even nurtured within the stronghold of secular humanism. From these diverse stories of "thinking Christians" a common theme emerges: the search for truth demands (to paraphrase contributor Kathryn Wiegand) a willingness to die to self—even to the hopes bequeathed by one's most cherished intellectual gifts—in order to be reborn in Christ. This book offers us what we too rarely ask of educated folk: not debate, but witness.

— *Sydney Leach*

EXPLORATIONS IN METAPHYSICS: BEING-GOD-PERSON. By W. NORRIS CLARKE, S.J. *University of Notre Dame Press. 228 pp. $19.95 paper.*

Selected from forty years' worth of essays by W. Norris Clarke—the Jesuit whose work helped emphasize the "uncompromisingly *existential character*" of Thomas Aquinas' metaphysics—this volume offers contemporary Catholic philosophy at its best. The essays have a twofold purpose. On the one hand, Clarke brings out the "originality" of Thomas, showing both how he was influenced by Aristotelianism, Neoplatonism, and Christian doctrine, and how he systematically transformed all that with his own distinctive "existential" understanding of being. On the other hand, Clarke "develops" aspects of Thomas' thought, where there exists a lacuna in the original, to suggest a "creative completion" of it consistent with its "intrinsic dynamism." Clarke's principal concern here is to elaborate Aquinas' philosophy of the person by connecting it with his whole notion of being "as intrinsically active and self-communicative." A personalism grounded in "Thomistic existentialism," he argues, can deepen contemporary insight into the dialogical and relational character of the person, while avoiding the dangers that come from the metaphysical systems of the Enlightenment. These essays succeed admirably in both objectives, in the process showing us how rediscovering the riches of its own tradition can enable Catholic philosophy to engage the contemporary intellectual world and address the critical issues of our day.

— *Kenneth L. Grasso*

EMBODYING FORGIVENESS: A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS. By L. GREGORY JONES. *Eerdmans. 312 pp. $28.*

Jones teaches at Loyola College in Maryland, and here offers a bracing polemic against and constructive alternative to "the therapeutic society," as Philip Rieff famously called it. In this analysis, there is nothing weak

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or sentimental about forgiveness. Forgiveness is hard work—Jones calls it a craft—to which all Christians are called and from which our society has much to learn.

How Do You Spell God? Answers to the Big Questions from Around the World. By Marc Gellman and Thomas Hartman. With a Foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. *Morrow. 206 pp. $15.*

Ostensibly a children's primer on comparative religion, this book will be of interest to adults as well. The emphasis, not surprisingly, is on the similarities between the various religions, commonality being seen as a foundation for good will and tolerance. But the authors, to their credit, do not fudge the religious differences either. Rabbi Gellman and Monsignor Hartman, known to many in the New York area as "The God Squad," frequently appear on the radio talk program of Don Imus, where a robust sense of humor is required for survival. That good humor is abundantly reflected in these pages. Plus, you can really learn something.

The Church Visible: The Ceremonial Life and Protocol of the Roman Catholic Church. By James-Charles Noonan, Jr. *Viking. 553 pp. $34.95.*

The late John Cardinal Krol of Philadelphia wrote, "James-Charles Noonan has produced a very interesting book, which as a matter of fact proceeds almost to the point of being fascinating." As a matter of fact, it gets there. This handsome book offers a careful account of the vast array of traditions, rules, and esoterica surrounding the ruffles and flourishes, smells and bells, of the Catholic Church on parade. From ceremonies employed upon the death of a pope, to a description of all those funny vestments, to the proper way to address a bishop or abbot, to questions that almost nobody ever thought to ask—on all these Mr. Noonan has an authoritative word. Catholicism is a fleshly (i.e., incarnational) thing, and this book exults in that truth. Of course, pomp and ceremony is not everybody's cup of tea, but for those who go in for that sort of thing, *The Church Visible* is the book to go for.

Football Saturday Afternoons, Athens, Ohio, 1953-56

Even in deep
Indian summer all wore hats.

Always before the end out they
stooped a rank at a time
to waiting buses.

Not a face dead
across could you read
close up. Once I grabbed
a freshman's spyglasses the nearer
to observe for the science of the occasion

a clicked pass or
first down
rush.

None stood or cheered.
None appeared
to move.

I knew then why
we used that word,
that time's handle for
those like them brought be-
neath ticking toward Thanksgiving
dour squat suns in coal country gone sour

for an hour frozen in retreat
from the Athens State
Hospital, *insane.*

Saul Bennett

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Richard John Neuhaus

Islam Cornered

I am impressed by how often it happens; when I lecture on religion in American life someone will urgently point out during the Q & A that our society is now religiously "pluralistic" and it is therefore misleading to speak of religion in mainly Christian and Jewish terms. Then someone almost inevitably refers to Islam, frequently adding that it is the "fastest growing" sector of American religion. The someone is usually a secularist for whom the appeal to pluralism is one way of diluting the idea of a predominantly Christian presence in society, and of warding off the notion that ours is in any sense, even demographically, a "Christian nation."

One can well understand the fears associated with talk about "Christian America." But the claim that America does not continue to be a predominantly Christian society, in any sociologically meaningful sense of the term, runs counter to the facts. The appeal to the growth of Islam is especially misplaced. The numbers crunchers have arguments among themselves, but the best survey research puts the number of Muslims in the U.S. somewhere between 1.5 million (with half of those being American-born blacks) and four million. Of course, Muslim organizations, for understandable reasons, claim many more, but provide no credible data in support of their claims. Moreover, a distinctively Muslim public voice in American life—except on questions of Middle Eastern politics—is virtually nonexistent. With respect to American culture and domestic politics, the various Muslim organizations demonstrate that they are good Americans by reinforcing the Judeo-Christian moral tradition that is thought to be the baseline of our common life. (As for the fastest growing sector of American religion, that is, far and away, Roman Catholicism.)

As in the U.S., so also on the world scene. I have frequently suggested that, at the edge of the Third Millennium, Christianity—with the Catholic Church and evangelical Protestantism in the lead—is uniquely situated to be the culture-forming dynamic in world history. After the end of Marxism, Christianity provides the only coherent, comprehensive, compelling, and promising vision of the human future. This vision has been most persuasively set forth by this pontificate in encyclicals such as *Centesimus Annus* (on the free society), *Veritatis Splendor* (on the universality of truth), *Evangelium Vitae* (on the culture of life), and *Ut Unum Sint* (on Christian unity as a sign of human unity). In addition, there is the factor of the sheer magnitude of the growth of Christianity, which is highlighted in *Redemptoris Missio*'s view of the Third Millennium as "the springtime of world evangelization."

Of course this line of argument runs the danger of flirting with the unpleasantnesses associated with "triumphalism." Given the choice between triumphalism and defeatism, I'll take triumphalism any day, but that is not to deny that there are indeed real dangers in what is meant by triumphalism. In this connection, too, one encounters the claim that Islam represents a comparable or even greater world force to be reckoned with. There is much to be said for that claim. The history of the next century will in large part be shaped by the encounter between Islam and Christianity. Not for nothing has John Paul II very assiduously cultivated relations with various Islamic leaderships, as difficult as that is. And of course there are other world religions, such as Buddhism and Hinduism. But, unlike Christianity and Islam, they do not have and are not likely to develop assertive, culture-forming ambitions on a world scale. Shortly before his death in 1986, the French intellectual André Malraux is reported to have said, "The twenty-first century will be religious or it will not be at all." To the extent that is true, the drama will mainly be played out between Christianity and Islam.

On the Far Side of Modernity

Prescinding for the moment from the question of theological truth (which is, of course, the decisive question), in that drama Christianity most decidedly

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has the upper hand. Relative numbers are only part of the story. There are almost two billion Christians in the world (one billion of whom are Roman Catholics) and somewhat under a billion Muslims. More important than numbers is the fact that Christianity, unlike Islam, is positioned on the far side of modernity's secular alternatives to religion. Put differently, Islam has missed out on the last several centuries of world-formative history. Today it views itself, with considerable justice, as the "object" rather than the acting "subject" of world history.

These realities are helpfully laid out in a marvelous new book by Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years* (Scribners, 433 pp., $30). Of course Islam is not limited to the Middle East, but, as Lewis notes, the Middle East is the birthplace of Islam and it is there that the consciousness of Islam continues to be effectively defined. In its first centuries, Islam had little to learn from the West ("Christendom") of the Middle Ages, being much farther advanced in most respects than the countries of Europe. But soon the West would pull far ahead in almost every field. The Ottoman Empire borrowed military techniques and cartographic information from the West, "but this information seems to have had little or no impact on intellectual life."

Lewis, the doyen of Western scholars of Islam, writes: "The literature available [to Muslims] on European history was minimal, and its impact infinitesimal. Such major movements as the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the Scientific Revolution passed unnoticed and without effect. Islam had its own Renaissance some centuries earlier, with significant effects even in Europe. There was no response to the European Renaissance, and no Reformation. All these ideas and others that followed them were seen as Christian and discounted accordingly. They were simply irrelevant—of no interest and no concern to Muslims."

There was one exception: "The French Revolution was the first movement of ideas in Europe which had a significant impact on the Middle East, and which began to change the processes of thought and action of its peoples. One reason for this is obvious. This was the first major upheaval in Europe that did not express its ideas in Christian terms, and that was even presented by some of its exponents as anti-Christian. Secularism as such had no appeal to Muslims; if anything, the reverse. But a movement free from the taint of a rival and superseded religion, and opposed by all the traditional enemies of the Ottomans in Europe, was another matter. It could at least be looked at on its merits, and might even yield the elusive secret of Western power and wealth, about which Muslims were becoming increasingly concerned."

In 1699, Islam made its last major assault on Christendom, crawling away from Vienna in defeat and disarray. A little over a century later, Napoleon would establish himself in Egypt, and from then on, French, English, German, Italian, Russian, and American forces would humiliate Islam by demonstrating that the Middle East was more or less their object to be fitted to their designs. Christianity moves into the Third Millennium having transcended modernity in many respects, while Islam feels threatened by the consequences of the three centuries and more of world history that it missed. Islam, especially militant Islam, suffers from a profound inferiority complex that is not unrelated to its being inferior in the intellectual, cultural, scientific, and technological achievements that now, and will likely continue to, shape the future.

Lewis emphasizes that, while many in the West speak simply of "the West" and think of it in secular terms, to most Muslims there is no doubt that the West means Christianity. The crisis they face is understood as, above all, a religious crisis. When, for example, the Iranians speak of the United States as the "Great Satan," the reference is not primarily to military or economic power but to the Quran's description of Satan as "the insidious whisperer who whispers in the hearts of men." The perceived threat is not chiefly that of conquest or colonial domination but of apostasy. Western journalists conventionally talk about the Muslim fear of Western "secularization," and there is something to that, but, according to Lewis, in Muslim eyes even secularization is but another guise of Christendom's ascendancy.

And so at the edge of the Third Millennium, Christianity—with Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism in the lead—is positioned to be the chief culture-forming vision in world history. There are arguments against that proposition, the most impressive being that the global market, joined to technology, consumerism, and a debased (mainly American) popular culture, is shaping the future. And, of course, only the future will tell. But I think one thing is clear: If Malraux is right about the next century being religious, and I suspect he is, Islam is largely irrelevant to the American scene and is severely disadvantaged on the world scene. All this is no occasion for Christian triumphalism. An Islam that feels hopelessly cornered could be extremely dangerous. Therefore the cultivation of authentic dialogue with Islam is a matter of greatest urgency. Unfortunately, such a dialogue is almost entirely nonexistent today. Why that should be the case is a story for another time.

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INHALING SECOND-HAND FANATICISM

Here they come again. The article is about addiction (to which, lest there be any misunderstanding, I am opposed). But then come the standard statistics about the cause of deaths: "In 1995 illegal drugs killed 20,000 Americans. Tobacco was responsible for 450,000 deaths; alcohol for more than 100,000." I am always bothered by these assertions, and not only because I like a good cigar and a Dewar's before dinner.

I know what it means to say that driving accidents kill 45,000 Americans per year. It means that, except for those who were terminally ill at the time, 45,000 people who otherwise probably had a long time to live were killed in driving accidents. Similarly with shootings, falls off high buildings, and electrocutions in the bathtub. But tobacco kills 450,000 people per year? Are we to suppose that they otherwise would have lived forever? There would seem to be no doubt that tobacco—more precisely, cigarettes—is not good for your health. Nor is being overweight, sexual promiscuity, jogging till you drop, or obsessive anxiety about your state of health. It may well be that in *x* number of cases cigarettes contribute, more or less, to the clinically determined cause of death. It may be that *y* number of people would have lived two or five or twenty years longer had they not smoked cigarettes. But that is very different from saying that cigarettes kill 450,000 people per year.

In his best-selling book, *How We Die,* Sherwin Nuland says we all die from the same cause: lack of oxygen to the brain. A thousand circumstances can contribute to that end, and innumerable, and often unknown, factors can contribute to each of those thousand circumstances. But the fact remains that—with or without cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs—the mortality rate is and will continue to be 100 percent. Understandably, people have a hard time accepting that. This is not a brief for adopting habits that are injurious to one's health and general well-being. There is a moral obligation to be a good steward of the physical self. But we should stop invoking statistics in a way that suggests we would naturally live forever unless "killed" by one bad habit or another.

It's bad enough that young people think they are exempt from the 100 percent mortality rule, but it's intolerable when a whole society turns so puerile. A seventy-six-year-old friend who is a chain smoker cites studies allegedly showing that cigarette smokers are significantly less likely to get Parkinson's or Alzheimer's. He says he would rather die of lung cancer, and hopes he is prepared to die of whatever finally does him in. Not dying at all is not an option. Maybe you have an argument against his view. I'm not sure I do.

Please. Spare me those letters pointing out that cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs can do great damage. I know, I know. My point here is about how we think about death, and how delusions of immortality can do great damage to our minds and souls. The pushiness of the health purists, including their manipulative use of statistics, pollutes the spiritual air, and is, I am sure, bad for our health. We should protest our having to inhale their second-hand fanaticism. I do not say it will kill us, but it can't be good for us. My point is not that we should light up, but, having come to terms with the constancy of the mortality rate, we would do well to lighten up.

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THE TESTING OF TRUST

Across the country this fall the Catholic people will once again be asked to give money for the Campaign for Human Development (CHD). And they will no doubt respond generously, once again. Not because they know much or anything about CHD, but because the Church asks them to and they trust the Church. CHD was established in 1970 at the height of the "radicalizing" of Christian "social consciousness." Most of the liberal Protestant churches had similar programs at the time, but they have for the most part withered away as church members were alienated by the oldline bureaucracies of professional prophecy. Not so with CHD.

Since its inception, $230 million has been donated to CHD. The literature handed out in the parishes suggests that it is a mother-and-apple-pie affair, "helping poor people to help themselves." It sounds downright conservative. In fact, CHD is the last slush fund for unreconstructed 1960s radicalism. Its theme is radical community organizing in the tradition of the late Saul Alinsky, founder of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) and author of *Rules for Radicals.* Alinsky's credo was, and that of numerous groups funded by CHD is, "To hell with charity; the only thing you'll get is what you're strong enough to get." The irony is, of course, that this credo of total confrontation is totally dependent upon the charity of the Catholic people. In fact, some IAF projects today are much less confrontational than Alinsky would have liked. Indeed, IAF, which has received many millions from CHD over the years, is almost moderate compared with other groups that are funded.

At the twenty-fifth anniversary of CHD last year in Chicago, two thousand activists gathered to cheer on

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the incitements of, for instance, Cornel West of Harvard, who said in his keynote address: "We are living in one of the most frightening and terrifying moments in the history of the nation. . . . And believe you me, there will never be enough police and prisons to deal with the avalanche of despair. . . . There's no serious talk about the fact that 1 percent of the population owns 48 percent of the financial wealth. That sounds oligarchic, plutocratic, pigmentocratic. . . . The ultimate logic of a market economy is the gangsterization of culture. The marketplace is an extension of the laissez-white supremacy. Same as those with homophobia, keeping trapped the humanity of gay brothers and lesbian sisters." Mr. West gets very excited as he goes on that way.

Pablo Eisenberg runs the Center for Community Change in Washington, D.C., a life-support system for radicalisms past. He described conservatives in Congress as "anti-American, anti-people, anti-democratic, anti-Christian, and anti-faith; intolerant, bigoted." CHD, he said, is "an attack on all the conservative values the Christian coalition claims it has." Without CHD funds, he observed, "more than half of the organizing in this country would not be taking place." No doubt he exaggerates somewhat. Even those who think that radical community organizing is a very good thing might pause over the fact that CHD also funds organizations that make no secret of their agitation for "abortion rights" along with gay and lesbian "liberation." Over the years, and again at the Chicago conference, activists expressed amazement at the fact that they were funded by the Catholic Church, as well they might.

Ignoring the Good Things

We raised the CHD problem several years ago in these pages, and the bishop then in charge of the program protested vigorously. Our criticism, he said, concentrated on the controversial and ignored the unquestionably good things funded by CHD. Well yes, of course. There are very few programs that don't do some good. Nobody suggests that CHD has given $230 million exclusively to efforts that directly contravene Catholic teaching or assault the sensibilities of the great majority of the Catholic people. The question is, Why does CHD give any money at all to such efforts? The answer comes back that, when CHD gives money to an organization, it is funding selectively—supporting only those activities that are in accord with Catholic teaching. But this is quite unconvincing. The elementary fact is that money is fungible. When an organization does not have to spend its own money on one part of its program, that money is freed up for another part.

To take but one example, Grassroots Leadership in North Carolina describes itself (in literature distributed at the CHD conference) as an organization that "works closely with all major southern movements and organizations, including civil rights, women, labor, lesbian and gay, environment, peace, and religious action." Some might say that its CHD grant of $25,000 is a small amount, but others might wonder why Grassroots Leadership should be helped at all in promoting abortion and gay liberation. Paraphrasing Senator Dirksen, $25,000 here and $25,000 there, and pretty soon we're talking real money. Apologists for CHD can insist until the cows come home that they are only funding morally unobjectionable activities, but the reality is that all those activists gathered in Chicago certainly thought they were being funded by CHD. And they are. The good bishop to the contrary, you cannot fund only the one half of an activist's time when he is not working to maintain abortion on demand.

The most solemn question is the exploitation of the trust of the Catholic people. It is almost certain that, if they knew what CHD monies supported, they would not support CHD. They should know. And even if some Catholics who reject Church teachings on moral questions would continue to support CHD, why on earth should the bishops? CHD itself needs to be radically reorganized. Or terminated. Meanwhile, when the basket is passed for the second collection on CHD Sunday, those Catholics who do know will want to exercise their own good judgment.

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Chronicler of the Conversation

Over four decades of remarkable industry, Martin E. Marty has established himself as the most influential of historians of American religion. Coming out of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Marty early declared his allegiance to the Protestant mainstream, and from his post at the University of Chicago he has virtually redefined the academic field of modern American religious history. The third volume of his *Modern American Religion* is just out from the University of Chicago (528 pp., $34.95). The second was discussed extensively here ("Political Religion: Reporting on the Reporters," August/September 1991), and its sequel should not go without notice.

The third volume covers the years 1941-1960. The thesis is that, while the previous two decades marked the centrifugal dynamics of American culture and religion, 1941-1960 accented the centripetal. In these

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decades, the fundamentalist-modernist controversy and other sectarian strivings gave way to religion as a unifying national force during World War II and prepared the way for the "religious boom" of the fifties marked by a civil religion of the American Way of Life. In the final chapter of the third volume, Marty sets the stage for the conflicts of the 1960s and another cycle of the centrifugal.

As in the earlier volumes, Marty takes the standard account of national history, especially political history, as the established story line, and then supplies the ways in which "the religious situation" reacted to, interacted with, and sometimes helped shape that story line. At center stage is "the national culture, where radio and television, films, magazines, and books" depict the American reality. The national culture is Marty's vital center, and at the end of the 1950s the vital center of the national culture was the liberalism described by Arthur Schlesinger's *The Vital Center*. In the ancillary religious story, Marty situates himself at the vital center of mainline Protestantism, which, as he points out, was even then no longer so very vital.

Marty and his research assistants, whom he generously acknowledges, are assiduous readers, and these more than five hundred pages are in large part an extended report on that reading. He strings together précis of books and major articles, devoting page after page to summarizing what was said by people as various as Arthur Cohen, Walter J. Ong, Will Herberg, James DeForest Murch, or Carl Henry. He says he is not writing a history of ideas, and that is probably right. It is more like a florilegium of other writers' commentaries on the religious situation, with Marty keeping his own commentary on the commentaries under tight rein. Apart from the centrifugal/centripetal thesis mentioned above, the volume offers no major argument, nor does it challenge the conventionally liberal reading of American culture in the forties and fifties.

The Importance of Being Reminded

That is not necessarily a criticism. As Dr. Johnson observed, we have a greater need to be reminded than to be instructed, and Marty's compilation of book reports and literary gleanings from the discussions of the time are a most instructive reminder. What is lacking in analysis or in the dramatic unfolding of a story is compensated for, at least in part, by Marty's providing us with a treasure trove of quotations. Readers of Marty's newsletter, *Context*, know how skilled he is in picking out the apt paragraph or article excerpt that illustrates what is being discussed in sundry forums. *Modern American Religion* is in some ways a multivolume *Context*, except that it more specifically focuses on what was said about "the religious situation" (the title of an early book by Marty).

The relative absence of women, blacks, Native Americans, and other minorities in his account is apparently a great embarrassment for Marty. He apologizes for the omission several times, and at length, but he notes that he can only report on who at the time was doing the public talking, namely, white males. One is struck also by the clarity of Marty's recognition that the Protestant mainline with which he identifies was already in dramatic decline by the end of World War II. The present volume provides the obsequies for the last vestiges of Protestantism as the national religion. With the resurgence of fundamentalism, now called evangelicalism, the mainline or ecumenical groups represented only a part, and that an increasingly dispirited part, of Protestantism. Moreover, Protestants of all varieties lived in fear of what they perceived as the threat of a rapidly growing Catholicism. Marty very effectively demonstrates the pervasiveness and intensity of anti-Catholic prejudice, and on that score and others he does not spare the magazine with which he has been associated for many years, the *Christian Century*.

In 1960 John Kenneth Galbraith published *The Liberal Hour*. That was the time in which Martin E. Marty had very much come into his own as a leading commentator, if not the leading commentator, on the religious dimension of an apparently ascendant liberalism. His liberalism was tempered, however, by his ineradicable formation as a Missouri Synod Lutheran, with the theological skepticism about liberal progress that attends that formation. By the end of volume three, he can scarcely contain his scorn for the mindless optimism that had seized liberal Protestantism in the form of William Hamilton's "death of God theology" and Harvey Cox's celebration of "the secular city." And yet, if he takes his stand anywhere, it is still, and despite all, with "the vital center."

That center is shrinking and is now obviously off-center, but where else is one to stand? In *Modern American Religion*, evangelicalism, Catholicism, and, of course, Judaism are all "them," and it is to Marty's credit that he does not presume that academic history provides a vantage point of neutrality untouchably above the fray. So the faithful chronicler will stay by his chosen station. By the final chapter of this third volume he sees the icebergs ahead, but he is determined to stay on, recording what people said, writing down what people wrote, until the very end. Of course, Marty knows that it isn't over until it's over, and the story of American religion, including the story of the liberal mainline, is certainly not over yet. I expect and hope that, with or without what once was thought to be the vital center, Martin E. Marty will continue to chronicle the conversation about the religious situation. The instruction is in being reminded.

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Facing Up to Censorship

"Mendacity. I am surrounded by mendacity," declares cancer-ridden Big Daddy in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.* The same might be said about the brouhaha over St. Martin's Press and the cancellation of its contract with David Irving to publish his *Goebbels: Mastermind of the Third Reich.* All I know about the author and his book is what I read in the *Times,* and there is no reason to trust that. They claim Irving belongs to the odious company of Holocaust deniers and, if true, that is very bad indeed. My interest is in the several accounts given of the controversy, including the most recent in the Sunday book review by Tina Rosenberg, author of a tendentiously leftist book on post-Communist Europe.

When word got out that it planned to publish *Goebbels,* St. Martin's was attacked in news reports and columns, and was deluged with protests, including death threats. Rosenberg writes: "Before the reversal by St. Martin's, Thomas Dunne [the editor who had acquired the book] released a statement arguing that books should not be rejected because they are offensive to certain groups in society or because their authors' lives are not admirable ones. He is right, of course, but this is a disingenuous argument in this case." Ms. Rosenberg is a principled opponent of censorship, of course. If Mr. Irving is determined to get a hearing for his perverse views, she says, he can always self-publish. Offensive books are published all the time, she notes, citing books by Howard Stern and O. J. Simpson. She even approves of the recent publication of a book by a Robert W. Thurston which claims that Stalin wasn't such a bad guy after all.

"But again," she writes, "*Goebbels* is different—and not just because of the sensitivity of its subject and the influence of its critics. Mr. Thurston may be a bad historian, but at least he is an honest one. David Irving, by contrast, is not just wrong, he appears to be engaging in deliberate distortion. Worse, he is a sneak: the uncautioned reader will absorb a version of history exonerating Hitler and minimizing the evil of the Holocaust without knowing it." This is incoherence and disingenuousness of a high order. It is "honest" history to exonerate Stalin. What is impermissible is an author who "appears" to be distorting the history of Hitler and the Holocaust. It is the duty of Ms. Rosenberg and others to protect unsuspecting readers who might otherwise "absorb" an account that misrepresents the facts. In fulfilling that duty, there is no criticism of the means employed, including death threats against editors. (Compare the almost universal outcry when Muslims threatened Salman Rushdie with death for his *Satanic Verses.)*

The truth is that in New York publishing there is an effective taboo against anything that smacks of Holocaust revisionism or denial. As it happens, I am all for taboos. It would be a very good thing were publishers prevented by public opprobrium (not including death threats) from trafficking in pornography, incitements to criminal behavior, and pseudo-scholarly exonerations of such as Hitler or Stalin. Whether or not it is backed by law, that is called censorship. The mendacity of the *Times* and of its apologists such as Tina Rosenberg is in censoring David Irving while claiming to be principled opponents of censorship. *If* Mr. Irving's book denies or belittles the Holocaust, I am glad that St. Martin's is not publishing it. The dissemination of such literature should be confined to the fever swamps where it belongs.

The sadness and dishonesty revealed by this episode, however, is a publishing world that defends and even celebrates the promotion of almost every real and imaginable evil, except when it comes to the evil of the Holocaust. The cultural consequence is Weimar on the Hudson, a world without censorship, except for one last and increasingly fragile taboo. Increasingly fragile because those who enforce the taboo declare themselves to be principled opponents of enforcing taboos, thus making their behavior appear arbitrary, irrational, and, by their own libertarian ethics, immoral. Holocaust denial should be beyond the pale. As should much else. Absent the nerve and wit required for an honest discussion of the perils and necessity of censorship, we will continue to be surrounded by mendacity.

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Confusing Culture and Counterculture

Author Richard Rodriguez, writing in the *National Catholic Reporter,* attacks Justice Antonin Scalia for saying in his dissent from the Colorado Amendment 2 case that homosexuals as a group have "disproportionate political power," "high disposable income," and "enormous influence in the American media." Scalia, says Rodriguez, is part of a backlash or "countermovement" against the acceptance of homosexuality. Writing "as a homosexual man," Rodriguez says he is confident his side is winning. "What I see is an astonishing change. I meet homosexual men and women now in every corner of American life. . . . I think of two Catholic families in California. They have been united in recent years by the love of two dying men—lovers dying of AIDS.

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There they all were—fifty smiling faces in a Christmas photograph. Three or four generations, standing alongside the two thinning men. That is the way the sexual revolution is taking place—by the Christmas tree, within the very family that Pat Buchanan and Pat Robertson invoke for their own purposes as unchanging and rigid. It is, paradoxically, because so many Americans are growing unafraid of homosexuality that the countermovement has grown."

There is something strange, and maybe paradoxical, here, but it is not as Mr. Rodriguez would have it. The acceptance of two men dying of AIDS may be a testament to love and forgiveness, but it is hardly evidence of people being "unafraid of homosexuality." Studies indicating that, for men actively engaged in the homosexual subculture, the average age of death is forty-two (a little more than half the life expectancy of an average American male) gives most parents good reason to fear that their sons will be homosexual. Gay propagandists—who do indeed have "enormous influence in the American media"—depict those with AIDS as wounded heroes returning from the front lines of the sexual revolution. We should be thankful for the innumerable families that, while they reject that depiction, care for their dying loved ones. And we should be thankful for judges such as Scalia who refuse to override by judicial fiat the democratically expressed rejection of a way of life that is, with good reason, viewed as a way of death.

Mr. Rodriguez says gay activists tend to portray their movement as "countercultural" when in fact it is the opponents of the movement who "have become the counterculture." "And they know it," Rodriguez adds. "That was partly what Scalia meant to imply: Homosexuals have power." Justice Scalia and Mr. Rodriguez would seem to agree on that, then. He is still outraged that Scalia says it, however, and one suspects the reason is that, for all his bravado, Mr. Rodriguez knows that gay power is not carrying the day against the moral sentiments and common sense of the American people. The only hope is to silence popular sentiments and sense by anathematizing them as bigotry and irrational prejudice. Which, regrettably, is what a majority of Justice Scalia's colleagues on the Court did in overruling Colorado's Amendment Two.

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HERE COMES EVERYBODY

"Two papal potboilers offer a disturbing glimpse of the polarization of American Catholicism." That's the heading of Peter Steinfels' reflection in the *New York Times* on new books by Andrew Greeley and Malachi Martin. Greeley's *White Smoke,* published by Forge Books, is about the wicked machinations of conservatives (i.e., reactionaries) in the election of a successor to John Paul II, while Martin's *Windswept House,* published by Doubleday, reveals that liberal (i.e., apostate) forces joined by Satanists and Masons are conniving to force the resignation of John Paul II. Such sensationalist fantasies at the polar extremities, says Steinfels, provide "a disturbing glimpse into the overheated id of Catholicism today." A constant reason for concern, no doubt, but not, at least not finally, all that disturbing.

The origin of the statement is in dispute, but somebody (maybe James Joyce) first said that Catholicism is "Here comes everybody." More than a billion people worldwide and sixty million in the U.S. cannot help but produce a maddeningly confused array of positions in contention. On the one hand, there is "We Are Church," a jerry-built coalition of more than twenty groups trying to get a million signatures in the U.S. for a referendum that calls for women's ordination, married priests, the popular election of bishops, and other changes favored by the left. The credibility of the coalition is not enhanced by the inclusion of Catholics for a Free Choice, a pro-abortion letterhead organization that the bishops conference has declared has no right whatever to call itself Catholic. Nor, I expect, will any sensible person be much impressed by a year's campaign that produces only a million signatures. Even if all those signing are Catholics (a point much disputed in a similar referendum in Germany and Austria), it will invite the inference that over 98 percent of Catholics in the U.S. do not agree with the positions espoused by "We Are Church."

At the other end, so to speak, are various traditionalist groups claiming that a de facto schism already exists in the Church in the U.S. It is frequently said that there are two Catholic churches, the magisterial and the dissenting, an assertion quite remarkable when coming from supposed champions of orthodoxy. Such an assertion flies in the face of the most elementary Catholic ecclesiology that affirms that all those are in communion with one another who are in communion with the bishops who are in communion with the bishop of Rome, who is Peter among us, and through whom Christ governs His one Church.

Those who do not persevere in charity are part of the Church only "in body" and not "in heart," but they are still part of the one Church *(Catechism,* 837). Moreover, it is by no means evident that perseverance or non-perseverance in charity falls neatly along the left/right divide. I have traditionalist friends who urge that we should be more candid in distinguishing between "true" Catholics and "false" Catholics. We should not say

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that there are sixty million Catholics in the U.S. but only six or, at the most, ten million *real* Catholics. My response to that sectarian way of thinking is that I did not become a Catholic in order to be a Protestant.

Given the size, influence, and moral stature of the Catholic Church in the world, it is hardly surprising that, between the extremities of Greeley and Martin, there is much jockeying and posturing aimed at laying claim to the "authentic center" of Catholicism. Consider the response to *Being Right: Conservative Catholics in America,* a very useful book edited by Mary Jo Weaver and R. Scott Appleby. We thought it would be interesting to have it reviewed by an intelligently moderate person on the liberal side of the aisle and so we asked Paul Baumann, associate editor of *Commonweal.* His review implicitly defined the center as including George Weigel and the wonderful people (the Catholic ones, at least) associated with FT, while marginalizing, if not excluding, groups such as Women for Faith and Family (WFF) and the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars (FCS).

Baumann referred to "the busy household" of James and Helen Hitchcock, which I took to be a compliment, even if he did not intend it that way. Helen heads up WFF and Jim is a founder of FCS, of which I am pleased to be a member. Immediately cries were heard from the conservative side of the aisle that FT had declared the Hitchcocks to be outside the charmed circle of the Catholic "center." Dear me. It is perversely flattering to learn that some people think FT is controlling the correlation of forces in American Catholicism, and even manipulating the hierarchy and the Holy Father himself, but of course it is utter nonsense. (The conspiratorially minded will respond: Well, he would say that, wouldn't he?)

Paul Baumann apparently thinks WFF and FCS are on the fringes. I am always surprised when readers are surprised that the editors do not necessarily agree with our authors on everything. Baumann notes that WFF says it endorses "all" Catholic teaching, and FCS claims to embrace "the entire faith of the Catholic Church." He comments, "*All* and *entire* are favorite modifiers for many conservatives." I suppose he's right about that. But, if the alternatives are "piecemeal" and "selective," I'll go with "all" and "entire" any day. All and entire, as in "catholic," which means "according to the totality" or "in keeping with the whole" (*Catechism,* 830). As, also, in "Here comes everybody." Which includes a good many people who are not as Catholic, or as catholic, as one might wish.

St. Augustine observed that God has many whom the Church does not have, and the Church has many whom God does not have. And no doubt the Church has many whom we might think she shouldn't have. But the embrace of her love is as promiscuous as is the love of Christ, whose body she is. In the end He will see to the sorting out of the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares. Short of the end time, some will separate themselves from the communion, and it is a good thing when the Church excommunicates such, which is really a matter of putting them on loving notice as to what they have done to themselves. But, so far as I know, the busy Hitchcock household, the editors of *Commonweal,* Andrew Greeley, and Malachi Martin are all in communion with the "center" that is Christ and His Church. Admittedly, in some cases it is a bit of a stretch, but that's the way it is with the grace of God. For which we all have reason to be grateful.

FT

Ecumenism as Consolidating Divisions

Some five hundred participants from the U.S. and Canada heard Michael Root of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, address the annual gathering of the National Workshop on Christian Unity in Richmond, Virginia. Root spoke on "A Striking Convergence in American Ecumenism," referring to three proposals that are on the table for a variety of oldline Protestant denominations. There is the Consultation on Church Union (COCU), which was launched in 1970 and has subsequently had a rocky history. Then there is the proposed "concordat" between ELCA Lutherans and Episcopalians, which would establish full communion between those two bodies. As would the "formula of agreement" among the ELCA, the Reformed Church in America (RCA), the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA), and the United Church of Christ (UCC). Root mentions in passing a fourth proposal on the world level for a joint declaration on the doctrine of justification between the Catholic Church and the churches of the Lutheran World Federation.

None of the American proposals aims at merging national denominations in the way that in recent history produced PCUSA, the United Methodist Church, and the ELCA. Originally, COCU was supposed to do that, but it has now retreated to a vaguer communion of worship, witness, and service in which the several bodies retain their "distinct ecclesiastical systems." "For lack of a better name," says Root, "one might call the shared model of the present proposals *denominational communion.*" COCU, along with the ELCA-Episcopal and ELCA-Reformed proposals, have built-in ambiguities. In

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the second there is admitted ambiguity about the necessity of bishops in episcopal succession (and whether or how Episcopalians are bestowing that on Lutherans), and in the third there is admitted ambiguity about the Real Presence in the Eucharist (a historic difference between Lutherans and Reformed).

The proposals avoid debates that are going on within the bodies involved. They declare "communion in faith" while leaving unclear what that faith might be. Says Root: "Within all of the involved churches, debates are proceeding about what some see as fundamental issues of faith, e.g., Trinitarian language, and about sensitive areas of ethics, e.g., sexuality. If the ecumenical proposals are truly received by the churches and a common life follows, then we cannot expect to insulate our ecumenical relations from these debates." The proposals also declare a common ministry, but, if the bodies involved have "differing policies on the ordination of homosexual persons, then the interchangeability of ordained ministers will be limited by a regulation that is more than merely administrative and practical."

While he does not quite say so, Root is skeptical about these proposals for "denominational communion." "I seriously doubt," he asserts, "that the continued divisions of our churches are today extensively experienced at the local level as barriers that divide Christians from one another. Survey data demonstrate that deep shifts in opinion have taken place. Especially among the Protestant churches (including here Episcopalians), the division of our churches has become rather painless." The danger, he says, is that these proposals are no more than "status quo ecumenism." "I am increasingly unconvinced ecclesiologically," says Root, "that the unity we are seeking is finally compatible with the long-term continuing existence in the same place of differing denominations with virtually unlimited autonomy." He concludes: "We need to keep in mind the larger movement within which these proposals might be significant steps, but still only steps along a path where we trust the Spirit will lead us further."

Divisions Unaddressed

For some readers, this discussion of rearrangements among oldline Protestants will inevitably bring to mind the jape about deck chairs on the Titanic. The chairs are stenciled with a bewildering variety of proprietorial initials: COCU, ELCA, RCA, PCUSA, UCC, and on and on. It is true that the bodies involved represent a declining and dispirited sector of Protestantism in America, and yet they still have millions of committed members and many vibrant local churches. It is hard to see, however, any real advance for Christian unity in these proposals for "denominational communion." As Root notes, in the experienced life of liberal Protestantism, the existence of separate denominations has become rather painless, because they have become meaningless.

And the present proposals might reinforce the much more significant division, which is between liberal Protestantism, on the one hand, and the robust and growing sector that goes by the name of evangelical Protestantism. Evangelicalism, in turn, includes not only groups such as the Southern Baptists and Assemblies of God, but also substantial numbers of more conservative members in the oldline groups who are increasingly alienated from their denominations. The churnings of American religion defy neat classifications.

ELCA Lutherans are key to two of the current proposals. It is expected that they will come before the ELCA for action in the next year. The formula for communion with the Reformed, including the very liberal United Church of Christ, would move the ELCA in a decidedly Protestant direction. The concordat with the Episcopalians, according to some, would move the ELCA in a more "catholic" and maybe even Catholic (meaning Roman Catholic and Orthodox) direction. But the Episcopalians (and the Anglican communion generally) began burning bridges with Orthodoxy and Rome by unilaterally ordaining women—a demolition that may be completed with this year's de facto approval, and perhaps next year's de jure approval, of the ordination of active homosexuals.

Whatever else is involved, the proposals would certainly mean a further dilution of whatever distinctively Lutheran theological identity remains in the ELCA. They would finalize the break with other Lutheran bodies in this country such as the Missouri and Wisconsin synods, bringing to a definitive end the century-long search for Lutheran unity. But that may in fact have happened with the formation of the ELCA in 1987, in which case the current proposals are but a further unfolding of the step that was, willy-nilly, taken then. At the same time, one notes that the large Missouri Synod has in recent years shown signs of drifting, in a most un-Lutheran way, into the camp of evangelical Protestantism. The result may be that there are ten million Lutherans in the U.S. but no presence that is distinctively Lutheran. Others can judge whether that is a great loss.

There is a great sorting out going on in the developments surveyed by Michael Root. Not too many years ago, "liberal religion" meant groups such as the Unitarians. Today they have lost their market niche and almost disappeared, having been displaced by the further liberalizing of what used to be called mainline Protestantism. It is very unlikely that a minister who is a unitarian—meaning someone who rejects the dogma of the Trinity—would be made to feel uncomfortable in, say, the United Church of Christ. The net result of the

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proposals addressed by Root would bring about two major accessions to liberal Protestantism—the Episcopalians and the ELCA Lutherans.

The "Anglo-Catholics" among the former and the "evangelical catholics" among the latter are ambivalent about being Protestant and emphatic about not being theologically liberal, but both parties have now been effectively marginalized within their denominations. Episcopalians and Lutherans of catholic sensibility and conviction must either seek another ecclesial home or hunker down in local enclaves in the hope that their denominations will let them be—a form of radical congregationalism that hardly accords with a belief in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. It is a bitter turn of events for those Lutherans and Anglicans who not too long ago thought there was a reasonable hope of ecclesial reconciliation with Rome and, in time, with Orthodoxy.

The Larger Movement

The ecumenical vision is strikingly narrowed in Michael Root's "A Striking Convergence in American Ecumenism." What he calls "denominational ecumenism" amounts to a hardening of the ecumenical isolation of liberal Protestantism. He is right to be unhappy with what he describes. It is worse than "status quo ecumenism." Root points to "the larger movement within which these proposals might be significant steps." It seems more likely that these proposals are not steps within that larger movement but against that larger movement. The larger movement that is worthy of being called ecumenical must surely include all Christians—oldline, evangelical, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox.

An invitation to that larger movement is issued in John Paul II's 1995 encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint* (That They May Be One). The invitation is premised upon the truth declared by Vatican II that all who are baptized and believe in Jesus Christ as Savior are truly but imperfectly in communion. Ecumenism is not a matter of creating unity but of bringing to fulfillment the unity that already exists. It is not a simple matter of "coming home to Rome," although full communion does require communion in the Petrine ministry that is exercised by the bishop of Rome. One of the more striking features of *Ut Unum Sint* is the way that John Paul put on the table for ecumenical discussion how that ministry of Peter might be exercised differently in order better to serve Christian unity. Unfortunately, that offer has received slight response from other Christians to date.

Nonetheless, the Catholic Church has made unmistakably clear that its commitment to Christian unity is irrevocable. *Ut Unum Sint* repeatedly affirms that ecumenism is not "optional," it is not an "appendix," but is essential to the Church's life and mission. It is in the very nature of being Church. The encyclical lays out a clear agenda of steps toward ecclesial reconciliation with both Orthodoxy and the various sectors of Protestantism. The Catholic Church alone is devoted to sustained, intense, and disciplined ecumenical conversation with all Christians. Its commitment is not contingent upon ecumenical schedules or schemes of reorganization. It is in this for the duration, until Our Lord returns in glory. This is the larger and more promising movement. By comparison with this movement, oldline Protestant proposals for "ecumenical convergence" are revealed as little more than the consolidation of existing divisions.

FT

While We're At It

■ Herbert C. of Cleveland put his very bright niece on his list, and we sent her a sample issue of FT. Now a very satisfied subscriber, she says she had never suspected her uncle of going in for such high-class reading. It is the kind of thing that can happen when you send us your list of family members, friends, and associates who should be reading FT. Why not do so right away?

■ Here's a new book by a Deborah G. Felder, *The 100 Most Influential Women of All Time* (Citadel Press). In compiling her list, Ms. Felder sent out a questionnaire to one hundred (presumably the most influential) heads of women's studies departments, asking them to nominate their top ten. After tallying the results, she came up with "the women who have had the greatest and longest-lasting historical and cultural impact." Number one is Eleanor Roosevelt and hundredth on the list is Lucille Ball. Others are Golda Meir (36), Coco Chanel (50), Marian Anderson (65), and Cleopatra (84). The Virgin Mary is listed tenth. I don't know why, but it seems one would have to list the Blessed Virgin first or not at all. Ms. Felder allows that Mary is "undoubtedly the most famous woman of all time [but] she is more a myth and an article of faith than a flesh-and-blood woman." In any event, those who come before Mary and after Mrs. Roosevelt are: Marie Curie, Margaret Sanger, Margaret Mead, Jane Addams, Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Harriet Tubman. Of her project Ms. Felder says, "I expect a lot of controversy." That is no doubt what she hopes for, but sympathy is the more appropriate response. Ms. Felder is a former editor at *Scholastic* magazine, which may help explain what your children are being told in school. One imagines that a young girl of a feminist bent would find it

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profoundly discouraging that, in order to come up with a hundred women who have most influenced world history, one has to reach for the likes of: Frances Perkins (12), Melanie Klein (23), Angela Grimke (24), Elizabeth Blackwell (26), Karen Horney (34), Zora Neale Hurston (40), Jane Goodall (48), Dorothea Lange (59), Mary Cassatt (69), Hillary Rodham Clinton (75), Frida Kahlo (78), Diane Arbus (88), and Edith Head (98). Now to find a hundred reasonably well-educated Americans, men or women, who could identify more than half of the figures on Ms. Felder's list. I do not for a minute credit this book's slur against the influence of women in world history.

■ *Render Unto Caesar . . . and Unto God* is a ninety-two-page report issued after several years of study by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Subtitled *A Lutheran View of Church and State,* it is a refreshingly thoughtful document that should be of interest far beyond Lutheran circles. Guided by the distinctively Lutheran Law/Gospel dialectic and the concept of the "twofold kingdom of God," the LCMS has been notably cautious about political engagement, except on issues such as abortion and parental responsibility in education where it believes it is acting in obedience to a clear word of Scripture. Among the conclusions of the report is this: "It may very well be that, in such a cumbersome process, the institutional church will miss many opportunities to say important things. But the day-to-day political process does *not* depend upon the church. If the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is to avoid the failures of those church bodies where the advocacy agenda is so full that their voices are simply dulled by overuse, it must be willing to accept such limited speaking and the cumbersome process of checks and balances that produces it." The careful approach of the LCMS is premised upon a highly spiritual (some would say spiritualized) idea of the Church. Reformed (Calvinist), Roman Catholic, and Orthodox communities have very different ecclesiologies which make possible and even necessary a concept of "social doctrine" that is alien to most Lutherans and to Protestants in free-church traditions. Nonetheless, both theologically and in terms of practical judgment, *Render Unto Caesar . . . and Unto God* contains much wisdom that can benefit all Christians. Given the pervasive theological and practical confusions that mark today's entanglements between religion and politics, clear thinking from any quarter should be warmly welcomed. (For more information, write LCMS, 1333 South Kirkwood Rd., St. Louis, MO 63122.)

■ A reader excoriates us for publishing an article a while back that seemed to accept one version of "theistic evolution." Didn't we agree with C. S. Lewis that evolutionary theory in all its possible variations is incompatible with Christianity? There's a bit more to it than that, it seems. The March 1996 issue of *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith,* a journal of evangelical persuasion, has an article that examines Lewis' correspondence with Bernard Acworth from 1944 to 1960 on precisely this subject. The authors conclude: "It is doubtful that Lewis would have felt comfortable espousing the views of present-day creationists. He always carefully indicated that he opposed evolutionism as a philosophy, not evolution as a biological theory. At the same time his correspondence with Bernard Acworth suggests that he had come in his later years to entertain more doubts about the claims made for organic evolution than his published works indicate." Of course Lewis is not the final word, but those Christians who sometimes seem to think he is might take note. We tend to sympathize with the argument of our own Phillip Johnson that it is frequently very difficult to distinguish, never mind separate, evolution as scientific theory from evolution as materialist philosophy.

■ Promise Keepers goes from strength to strength, gathering hundreds of thousands of men to pledge themselves to moral and spiritual renewal as husbands and fathers. In 1997, Promise Keepers plans to bring a million men to Washington. Founder Bill McCartney is placing increasing emphasis on the multiracial character of the movement. The sixth of seven promises men are asked to keep is to be "committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity." Of course everything bright and beautiful has its cavilers. Randall Bailey of the International Theological Center in Atlanta says it's all very nice for Promise Keepers to talk about racial reconciliation but that doesn't address the systemic root causes of racism, and so forth and so on. According to this report, "Bailey said leaders of another large gathering of men, the Million Man March in Washington last October, had been more committed to 'systemic dismantling' of racism." That's one way of describing Minister Farrakhan's racist program of black separatism.

■ Inspired by Roger Rosenblatt, our friend Jim Wall, editor of the liberal *Christian Century,* deplores the opprobrium surrounding the L-word. Noting the rigidly quota-ized structure of the Democratic Party, he even speaks of "liberal fundamentalism." He recognizes that abortion is somehow related to the decline of liberalism. Like Rosenblatt, Wall favors the current abortion license but complains that liberals have not been appropriately sensitive to "the deeply held convictions of those who find abortion morally unacceptable." What is to be done about the fact that

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the law permits abortion at any time for any reason during the course of pregnancy, that more than thirty million babies have been killed in this country alone since the 1973 *Roe* decision, that four thousand innocent human beings are slaughtered daily, that many thoughtful Americans believe the country is engaged in a moral struggle as great as that over the emancipation of slaves? Wall's answer: "Abortion is a complex moral issue which demands constant and thoughtful discussion." One need go no farther than that non-answer to discover why liberalism has become for so many a term of opprobrium.

■ Many pleasant things have been said, and deservedly so, about Irving Kristol's *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea,* but perhaps nobody has put the heart of the matter so well as FT author Wilfred M. McClay, who reviews the book in *Commentary*: "Perhaps, then, there is another sense in which Kristol deserves the appellation of 'godfather.' Ever since the appearance of Mario Puzo's book of that title, there has been a tendency to think of a godfather as nothing but a power broker. But in the word's original meaning, a godfather is one who sponsors a child at baptism and thereafter is expected to take a leading role in his spiritual instruction within the community of faith. To be sure, there is something odd in crediting this 'neo-orthodox' nonobservant Jew with a status so closely associated with Christian practice. But Kristol may have turned out to be just the right kind of godfather for an intellectual and political movement, neoconservatism, that began its life without much regard for spiritual things. In the process of seeking to preserve the genuine achievements of modernity, many of us, neoconservative or not, have come to acknowledge modernity's manifold failures and sicknesses—only to find that Irving Kristol has already been saying such things for a long time, and saying as well that our view of political and social life, and the moral calculus by which we shape our individual and social lives, derive from what we believe about ultimate matters. Slowly but surely, the rest of us are catching up with him."

■ More attention will be paid in these pages to Christopher Shannon's marvelously lucid *Conspicuous Criticism: Tradition, the Individual, and Culture in American Social Thought from Veblen to Mills* (Johns Hopkins University Press), but, simply to whet your appetite, this from the conclusion: "Finally, the recovery of the formal spheres of freedom and necessity should bring with it a respect for the informal realm that exists to some degree in both of these spheres. This informal world I take to be the ordinary life of work and love. Respect for this world entails a rejection of the modern 'affirmation' that rationalized ordinary life into a locus of meaning; it entails a much humbler 'acceptance' of ordinary life in all its ordinariness and informality. The world of friendship—of drinking and talking, working and playing, loving and hating—may bring happiness or it may not; in neither case does it bring 'meaning.' It is no less important for being, in a sense, meaningless. Our modern spiritual efficiency experts, including many social historians, tremble at the prospect of some ordinary experience failing to produce meaning. Acceptance of ordinary life requires an acceptance of waste still anathema to most people in our work-obsessed culture. All things do not exist to be read. Experience does not have to be written to be valid. The informal must be left informal. Of course, distinctions between the formal and the informal, or freedom and necessity, only make sense within specific traditions. The modern revolt against God and nature has all but incapacitated the Western world's ability to think within a tradition. The only hope for addressing the issues I have raised in this conclusion lies in the great surviving traditions of the premodern West: orthodox Judaism, Roman Catholicism, the Orthodox churches, and Islam. For those outside of these traditions, I can only offer the words of C. Wright Mills to his liberal critics: 'I feel no need for, and perhaps am incapable of arranging for you, a lyric upsurge, a cheerful little pat on the moral back.' The bourgeois attempt to construct a rational alternative to tradition has failed."

■ "As I get older," a friend remarked over dinner, "being Irish means more to me." I've known him for thirty years and I didn't know it meant anything to him before. But then, it was the eve of St. Patrick's Day, which in New York is a holy day up there with Easter and Christmas and just a bit ahead of Pentecost, and he had just finished reading Tom Cahill's masterful tale, *How The Irish Saved Civilization,* which is all about how fifth-century Irish monks rescued the world from the barbarians. Up at Radio City Music Hall, *Riverdance* was pulling in big crowds. It's a show of Irish dance and music purporting to celebrate the essence of Irish culture. Another friend says he was enjoying immensely this flamboyant assertion of "Irish identity" until he realized halfway through that there was not one single reference to anything Christian. Afterwards, he joined the cast and their friends, and asked about this oddity. Oh yes, he was told by one and all, *Riverdance* is very deliberately part of a bigger artistic and intellectual endeavor to reconstitute Irish identity on a solely Celtic and pagan basis, and very specifically against anything Catholic. "The Church is finished," the smart set declared, "Nobody under forty goes to Mass any more." Of course that is very far from being the case, but it is further confirmation of the thesis advanced here by David Quinn ("To Be a Conservative in Ireland: A Lament," November 1995) that the cultural grandees of Ireland are dead set on

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plunging into the swamp of secularization from which some other societies are slowly emerging. Ironic that what Ireland saved for the world it may now itself be losing, but one expects that the time of the monks will come around again.

■ "There is a newspaper that scratches where people itch, and I am its editor." That's the opening line in a promotion letter from Tom Fox of the *National Catholic Reporter* (*NCR*). "*NCR* goes after that itch. It does not take its stand with anybody's status quo, political or denominational. It tries to look meaning in the eye." I've been sitting here these last five minutes looking meaning in the eye, and I think meaning just blinked.

■ I'm sorry, but it does make you wonder whether these people are really so dumb or whether they believe that others are so dumb. The Pilgrim Press (United Church of Christ) has brought out a big thick book of forty-five essays representing, they say, "an accessible, balanced presentation of the abortion debate." *Abortion: A Reader* is edited by Lloyd Steffen. Of the forty-five authors, four are noted as critics of abortion: Pope Paul VI, Karl Barth, Father James T. Burtchaell, and Stanley Hauerwas, and the first two of those are long since dead. The section representing the "Roman Catholic" position has an essay by Daniel Callahan, who is not a Roman Catholic, and former priest Daniel Maguire, who is among the more shrill public opponents of the Church's teaching. The book is little more than a bundle of pro-abortion tracts. *Abortion: A Reader* is a deeply dishonest book. Unless, of course, the publisher and editor really are that dumb. "Why this book?" asks the editor in the preface. "If this volume can contribute to restoring through a balance of thoughtful articles a sense of the moral complexity provoked by this troubling, even dangerous issue—and highlight the role of religion in shaping that complexity—then that complexity will, as an answer to the questions asked, suffice." There you have it: The answer to the question of the morality of abortion is that the question is complex. It follows, of course, that people should be permitted to do what they want with respect to abortion. One is not surprised that the book is propaganda but that it is such transparent propaganda. Even from the viewpoint of a pro-choice publisher, what purpose can that serve? The editor asks the right question, "Why this book?" It might be charitable to try to believe that the answer is more complex than our opening sentence suggests.

■ The Catholic Alliance is a division of the Christian Coalition, but an evangelical Protestant observer, Timothy Sherratt of Gordon College in Massachusetts, says, "The child may eclipse its parent given half the chance." Sherratt, a political scientist writing in the Calvinist-oriented *Public Justice Report,* says: "For many Protestants whose own denominations have left them with very thin offerings in the area of social and political thought and action, much learning might profitably take place. Of course, if Catholic social teachings were to make their way to the center of the Coalition's mission, one wonders what reception will be accorded them. It is too early to tell, but those of us evangelicals who affirm the potential for the saints to make the best citizens should welcome this effort by American Catholics to bring their well-developed social teachings into the public debate."

■ Forget for the moment whether the government should fund abortions. The question is whether churches should do so. The Presbyterian Church (USA) has been doing that for years through its medical benefits plan. Ditto the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The editor of the independent *Lutheran Forum,* Pastor Leonard Klein, writes: "The Church Council of the ELCA voted to reject the Board of Pensions' carefully worked out restrictions on payment for abortion. The ELCA will continue, consciously and openly, to pay for a most grotesque mortal sin—using offerings gathered at its most sacred assemblies to do so. Its readiness to pay for this act far exceeds that of most states and of the federal government. (And this same Board of Pensions is very stingy about elective surgery and contraceptives and second-guesses all sorts of medical decisions of its members both under its own plan and under Aetna's.) At the very time when Congress was recoiling in horror from the so-called partial-birth abortion, as liberal Senator Barbara Boxer was reduced to holding up pictures of families to try to counter the more relevant pictures of late-term fetuses from the other side, the ELCA voted to pay for it. The council looked squarely at an opportunity to honor the fifth commandment and yawned. Faced with a fundamental issue of faith and morals, they addressed it as a question of rules and procedures. This is all bad; and merits as severe a judgment as any the prophets ever called down on Israel and Judah." Klein notes that the same meeting of the Church Council, in response to a torrent of protest, "worried and fretted and took sorrowful actions over the expulsion at long last of two rogue parishes in San Francisco" that had installed actively homosexual pastors. "But there was no such display of empathy for the faithful pastors and congregations whose consciences will be racked not because they set out to flout Christian sexual ethics but because they wish to honor the Torah, worship truly the Father of all life, and embrace the Gospel of life. Real churches don't kill babies."

■ "I think it is safe to say that Paul's enlistment in Jesus' cause is one of the most brilliantly successful hires in the annals of human organizational history," writes Bob Briner in *The Management*

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Methods of Jesus (Nelson). Mr. Briner's little book is in the tradition of Bruce Barton's best-selling book of the 1920s, *The Man Nobody Knows,* which depicted Jesus as a Bill Gates with a really big talent for the vision thing. Jesus was always responsive, says Briner. He never said, "I'll get back to you," nor did he put anyone on hold. On the other hand, he did warn his disciples against casting their pearls before swine, which, according to Mr. Briner, is a lesson for "top executives who could devote much of their time responding to questions, comments, and criticisms that are really not worth the investment." So Jesus is inconsistent. He is large, he contains multitudes. *The Management Methods of Jesus* has a place in the long, broad stream of schlock inevitably produced by a religion that is incorrigibly popular. Popular, we can never forget, is inseparably related to vulgar. And there is a distressingly frequent connection between schlock and saintliness. "What I was really trying to do, and what I believe," says Mr. Briner, "is that Jesus' teaching is relevant for all of life." Who can argue with that? The pastoral response to the piously toxic is to barf in private and then gently point the well-intended toward worthier understandings of Jesus' person and message. That is not a management method. It is long-suffering love. Very long. As in somewhere around number 323 out of seventy times seven. Good pastors try not to keep count.

■ It's a big to-do in human rights circles and is getting a lot of attention in black talk shows and magazines, but the general public seems largely indifferent. As Joseph R. Gregory reported in these pages ("African Slavery 1996," May), human slavery is a booming business in parts of Africa, and nowhere so blatantly as in the Sudan. Since gaining its independence in 1956, the Islamic government in Khartoum has been waging war against the black and mainly Christian south, routinely enslaving the prisoners who are not killed. The current to-do is over Minister Louis Farrakhan's visit to Sudan and other countries where he denied, as he has denied since his return, the existence of slavery. Not so incidentally, Farrakhan is reported to have been promised in excess of a billion dollars from Libya and other crackpot regimes in the area. Farrakhan alleges that the claims about slavery are part of a Zionist conspiracy to discredit Islamic states and his Nation of Islam. His organization's international representative, A. Akbar Muhammad, asserts: "Because Islam has gained such a wide appeal among young black Americans and Minister Farrakhan has penetrated into the Christian community with his Million Man March, what would be better than to say to Christians and black people across the country, don't get involved in this Islamic group; don't fall in love with a government that supports enslavement of black Christians." Of course he's right. Were this a Zionist conspiracy, that would be a smart thing to say. The fact is, however, that the most respected human rights groups and the U.S. State Department have amply documented the horrors of slavery in Sudan, and organizations such as Randall Robinson's TransAfrica Forum have taken the lead in calling Farrakhan to account. In the fall of 1995, many Americans, both black and white, were appalled by what appeared to be the anointing of Minister Farrakhan as the premier spokesman for black Americans. In subsequent months, his greedy pandering to brutal dictators, his vulgar displays of anti-Jewish and anti-Christian conviction, joined to his serving as an apologist for slave regimes, have reduced his standing very considerably. It is only the moral madness of our times that can explain why there is still a debate over whether Louis Farrakhan should be viewed as a legitimate player in American public life. Part of that maddening madness is that, in the violent disarray of our inner cities, his Nation of Islam has taken the lead in encouraging black men to accept responsibility for neighborhoods and families. However morally perverse Farrakhan may be, he is playing a positive role in provoking other black leadership, especially in the churches, to break loose from the disabling delusion that they cannot take charge of their own lives. That said, however, we should not lose sight of the perversity.

■ Preposterous. That's the word employed by Tom Sine who reviews *The Mainline Church's Funding Crisis* (Eerdmans) in the *Christian Century.* Sine deplores proposed cuts in spending on the welfare state and writes, "Since declining giving has already forced many denominations to reduce their urban ministry programs, to expect them to make up for the decrease in government spending is preposterous." He's exactly right, of course, and that is why nobody is expecting that. Since Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty, the government has spent five trillion dollars on programs allegedly helping poor people, with the result that there are more poor people in a more desperate state of dependency than thirty years ago. The point is not for churches and other voluntary institutions to replace the government in funding those programs; the point is to replace those programs. New paradigms, anyone?

■ A new thing is *Rerum Novarum,* a publication of the Fordham Catholic Law Students Association named after the 1891 encyclical of Leo XIII addressing "new things." It is a handsomely produced journal with an intelligently critical edge toward Catholic higher education in general and Fordham University in particular. Fordham describes itself as a university "in the Jesuit tradition," which makes the editors wonder why professors are appointed and promoted who are very publicly opposed to Catholic teaching. They are particularly puzzled by the appointment to the law

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school of a professor who was formerly staff attorney for the National Organization for Women (NOW) Legal Defense and Education Fund, a major agitator of "abortion rights." "Fordham Law School," say the editors, "is no longer 'Jesuit' in even the most watered-down sense of the word." Maybe so, but one wonders if the editors fully appreciate just how watered-down "Jesuit" can get. For our part, we are still pushing for an expansion of the ecumenical agenda to include a Jesuit-Catholic dialogue, a proposal that has not met with the official approbation of the Society of Jesus, among whose members, we hasten to add, we count some of our best friends. For information about *Rerum Novarum,* write Catholic Law Students Association, Fordham University School of Law, 140 West 62nd Street, New York, NY 10023.

■ Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we lay aside reason in search of reasons. Building on Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation,* Evelyn Pluhar has written a big book in search of reasons for favoring the rights of animals over those of "marginal" human beings *(Beyond Prejudice: The Moral Significance of Human and Nonhuman Animals,* Duke University Press). Reviewing the book in the *New Republic,* Colin McGinn finds it "exceptionally thorough, expertly reasoned, and entirely convincing." He writes: "Compare a normal chimpanzee to a severely retarded human child unable to take care of itself or to speak or to reason. Given that neither qualifies as a rational moral being, capable of asserting its rights, why do we allow vivisection of the chimp but not of the child? Surely, if moral significance attaches only to full persons, then the child should be granted no more protection than the chimp, or the pig awaiting slaughter." He goes on: "Would you shoot retarded people because they are enroaching on your food supply or messing up your back yard? Would you kill and eat them because of the culinary pleasure to be derived? If your answer is no, then you should return a similar answer in respect of animals." "It is not just the welfare of animals that is at stake here. The integrity of human reason is also on the line. Where is our intellectual pride?" Where indeed? Pluhar and McGinn argue that rights are grounded not in personhood, nor in sentience, nor in capacity for action, but in "conation." (The notion that rights might be an endowment from You Know Who is obviously beneath the consideration of those in thrall to intellectual pride.) According to most dictionaries, conation is an impulse or instinct that looks very much like purpose. But for Pluhar-McGinn it is purposefulness itself, and all purposes are equal. "A dog's desire to run free does not matter less to it than my desire to enjoy a ballet performance matters to me." I have had many dogs in my life. My last, the late lamented Sammy, had, so far as I could see, no desire—if that is the right word—greater than to please me. (Which, of course, is what makes dogs so singular and endearing.) A mere word or whistle, and she would promptly break off from running free and eagerly come to get a pat on the head. One very much doubts that the "conative" Mr. McGinn can be comparably whistled away from his ballet, but perhaps I am wrong. I do know that the people next door have a cat that has a conative thing about catching mice. It appears that the mice have their own conations and evidence no respect whatever for the cat's right to eat them. There would seem to be something at work here that is very much like what used to be called the order of nature, a concept that is, naturally, not acknowledged in the tangled web of reasons woven by Pluhar-McGinn. In considering "the moral significance of academic and nonacademic animals," we are morally bound to recognize that the former have rights beyond what their literary conations might suggest.

■ Man, it would seem, is the only animal to make the argument that he is not superior to other animals. Peter Singer and the animal rights sophists do not say that other animals do claim to be superior, but they pay insufficient attention to the fact that we human beings appear to be the only ones debating the question of relative standings in the order (dare I say natural order?) of things. The subject of our relationship to, and responsibility for, other animals is of great importance, and we should not permit the discussion of it to be discredited by the sophistries of Singer & Co. Frans de Waal takes up some of these questions in *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals* (Harvard University Press). He expands on what Robert Trivers first called "reciprocal altruism," a phenomenon noted among chimpanzees and other animals who in certain circumstances help one another when it does not appear to be in their immediate interest. Derek Bickerton, who has written at length on these questions, says of de Waal's argument: "Far from being half ape, half angel, torn between a moral sense that strives upward and an eons-old bestial viciousness that drags us down, he portrays us as inheritors of a basically moral view of life that has evolved naturally over countless millenniums—not through some fictitious social contract between self-sufficient individuals, but through the inevitable give-and-take of communal living." Despite its overconfidence about evolution, there is much that can be commended in the idea of a natural moral view that is not unrelated to a natural moral order. Especially if we understand that "communal living" includes not only "others" but an "Other" that compels us—and maybe, in ways that surpass our ken, also chimpanzees and puppy dogs—to strive upward. It makes more sense, of course, if we understand that the Other condescended downward, becoming our mediator and making us mediators between the rest

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of creation and the Creator. But then, we must not be too hard on Mr. de Waal and others who write on these subjects for being so desperately short on Christology. The failure to explore more systematically the theological questions that they engage is the result of a secularist mindset that took centuries to entrench and will not be remedied without great intellectual effort.

■ There is the Catholic Alliance, and then the Interfaith Alliance, which aims to counter what is done by groups such as the Catholic Alliance. And now here is a release from the Atheist Alliance. They held their convention in Minneapolis in April on the theme "Imagine a World Beyond Belief." Apparently this has nothing to do with the feminist "RE-Imagining" conference also held in Minneapolis a while back, a conference that provoked such a storm in some oldline churches. There used to be American Atheists, an organization started by Madalyn Murray O'Hair, who old timers will remember from the school prayer decisions in the early 1960s. American Atheists, this release informs us, "is no longer viable." "The Atheist Alliance differs substantially from American Atheists in its democratic organization and decision-making, and its even-tempered, positive approach to state-church separation conflicts." Democratic, even-tempered, positive atheism? Oh, for the fights of yesteryear.

■ Too many book reviews, readers occasionally complain. But most appreciate the fact that FT covers books more thoroughly than any journal of its kind. Yet, every once in a while, we miss one that should have been treated. Sometimes because the review we get isn't up to par, sometimes because we didn't think the book worthy of attention. The latter was the case with Jack Miles' *God: A Biography* (Knopf) which, worthy of it or not, got a great deal of attention. In fact, it won a Pulitzer Prize, which is an award that writers of like mind give to one another. Dale Patrick of Drake University in Iowa reviews it in *Theology Today* and confirms our initial judgment. What Miles does, in effect, is "to put God on the couch." He is helped in this, says Patrick, by his odd way of reading the Hebrew Bible. "Miles proposes to read the sequence of books in the order of the Jewish canon, the Tanakh. The Septuagint order, followed by the Christian church, reads from creation to eschaton, but the Hebrew Bible reflects the order of canonization, with a rather random arrangement in the third and last section. Read seriatim according to Miles, the Tanakh ends with God's dotage and humans taking charge of their own affairs. This reading, however, is hardly congruent with Jewish tradition, which weights the Torah (Pentateuch) more heavily than the other sections and insists that it set the norm for all exegesis." Over the centuries, Jews and Christians have read the Bible synthetically, showing how one part complements and reinforces others. But Jack Miles is out to have fun. "Miles reads against the grain of pious readings, traditional and contemporary. The pious ascribe omnipotence to God, so Miles finds evidence that God is dependent upon humans for self-consciousness and authority. The pious ascribe omniscience to God, so Miles shows that God continually discovers who God is and what God is about. The pious ascribe justice to God, so Miles argues that God came by ethical concerns late and never could quite control God's chaotic impulses. (Miles delights in telling those bloody stories the pious bury in discrete silence.) The pious ascribe love of humans, and especially Israel, to God, so Miles avers that God only discovered love after losing Israel in the exile. The pious see God's purposes as spiritual, so Miles finds evidence that God was originally driven by reproductive anxieties. In order to puncture some contemporary apologetics, Miles denies that Abraham had faith (versus existentialists), that the Lord's deliverance of Israel from Egypt had anything to do with the oppressed (versus liberationists), and that God had any feminine qualities in God's personality until God was old and decrepit (versus feminists)." The end result of *God: A Biography*, says Patrick, "is deconstruction for the purpose of pleasing cultured despisers and discomfiting the pious." We decided not to review the book because it seemed such an obvious piece of clever catering to the contemptuous. Innocents that we are here at FT, we underestimated the market for that sort of thing.

■ He is not the only one, of course, but Russell Hittinger is among the most impressive thinkers making the connections between theological reflection and public discourse. Hittinger, who has been teaching at Catholic University in Washington, was recently appointed to a newly established chair in Catholic studies at the University of Tulsa. He had this to say at a recent Evangelical-Catholic conference on natural law at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington: "Today, especially in the United States, Evangelical Protestants find themselves reconsidering the issue of natural law. Their interest seems to be occasioned by two things. First, the political success of Evangelical Protestantism has made it necessary to frame an appropriate language for addressing civil politics and law. Second, the Evangelicals find themselves having to dialogue with Catholics, with whom they share many common interests in matters of culture and politics—interests which would seem amenable to natural law discussion. Even though it is true that many Protestants today are chiefly interested in the use of natural law ad extra, as a way to speak to the 'world,' the lesson they might learn from recent Catholic moral theology runs in the other direction. For assuming the legitimate and persistent need of the Christian churches to address worldly issues of

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justice and morality, it is easy to lose control of this discourse, so that natural law makes moral theology superfluous, and even impossible." Unlike some Thomists in the past and at present, Hittinger insists that moral theology is really *theology*. Natural law is not a kind of moral esperanto to which Christians add a theological accent. Natural law is, rather, a participation in the divine law, which is to say it participates in the mind of God, which is to say that natural law cannot be rightly understood apart from the doctrine of God. Here Hittinger finds himself in considerable sympathy with the great Protestant theologian, Karl Barth, who polemicized against what he viewed as a de-theologized version of natural law espoused by some Catholic thinkers. All this may seem impossibly abstract, but it has very practical implications for the ways in which Christians of all stripes make moral arguments in public, and we can count on Russell Hittinger to be unfolding those implications in a growing number of forums, not least being this journal.

■ A number of states have feticide laws that make it a criminal act to kill a fetus, other than by abortion. Such laws make it clear that drunk drivers and homicidal maniacs do not have the same privileges enjoyed by abortionists. The Virginia House of Delegates, however, recently rejected a feticide bill after heavy lobbying by pro-abortion groups. Ms. Karen Raschke of Planned Parenthood told the legislators, "If you call a fetus a person for the purpose of the homicide statute, it makes it arguable that a fetus is a person for the purposes of abortion." It would seem to follow.

■ There are no doubt readers who, in their pitiful naiveté, assume that some cultural artifacts are inherently superior to others. Continuing on that risible assumption, they hold to the view that there is something like a canon of cultural greatness—in literature, philosophy, music, painting, and so forth. In the name of multiculturalism, the entirety of the progressive academy has for some years now been earnestly engaged in discrediting such outdated notions. Nonetheless, the academy's herd of independent minds is still capable of producing a new wrinkle on regnant ideas. For instance, Gary Taylor's new book *Cultural Selection* (Basic) goes into great detail to demonstrate that presumed cultural superiority is the product of political, military, and economic imperialism. In the course of his argument, he avails himself of Darwinian theory and the scientific language of biology. The result is sometimes striking. Many people, for example, might think that the world recognized Shakespeare as great because he is great. Mr. Taylor devastates such simplistic thinking. "Shakespeare was like a local parasite—attached to a species that eventually dominated its own niche and migrated out into others, taking the parasite along and introducing it into new ecosystems that had, often, no defenses against it." Wherever the English-speaking species has gone, the Shakespeare parasite has conquered. In fact, the reality is even worse than that, for the parasite has insinuated itself into numerous other languages suffering from immune deficiency. It would seem that the only defense against it is illiteracy, a defense greatly enhanced by the work of Mr. Taylor and critics similarly devoted to destroying the parasite's host culture. Since the parasite has so entrenched itself in other cultures victimized by the English-speaking disease, however, it seems likely that a hundred years from now an ascendant China, for instance, might reimpose Shakespeare upon what is left of Western culture. The battle against greatness never ends. It is a dirty job, but somebody has to do it. As Burke might have said, the only thing necessary for the triumph of greatness is for literary critics to do nothing.

■ One of the islands of sanity at the *New York Times* is Richard Bernstein, who has held several posts and is now a book critic. I have previously called attention to his 1994 book, *Dictatorship of Virtue*, an incisive critique of all that runs under the banner of political correctness. Some say the criticism of political correctness has been overdone, and we have generally avoided the use of the term in these pages. But Bernstein says, "It is still going strong and is becoming all-pervasive in a quiet way, especially in textbooks and school systems and university training courses and in press coverage. It's really becoming something of the official ideology of the country, something taken for granted." A portent of the future, he believes, is the Hans Christian Andersen School of Many Voices, an experimental elementary school in Minneapolis. "I asked the social studies staff, 'Well, when the children are finished here, whom do they admire?' The answer was 'Well, they certainly don't admire white people and they certainly don't admire Christians because of what Christians have done to other people and because of what white people did to black people.' Implicit in this whole thing is the repudiation of the West. There is a sense that Christianity, especially, is culpable. Judaism gets off the hook because Jews are in some respects still seen as a victim group and it's just not chic to say nasty things about Judaism. We're still too close to World War II and the problem of anti-Semitism for American educators of whatever stripe to take that on. But Christianity, because it's the majority religion, because this is still, in some sense, a Christian nation, gets trashed. That's part of multiculturalist theory. I find that attitude interesting because some of the important principles embodied in Christianity have shaped this country: We are a free, prosperous, basically happy country that gives lots of opportunities to people and we're tolerant of differences. It's strange, this trashing of your own culture and your own

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identity. Of course, it's a very Christian thing [to do] when you think about it. Christianity, more than any other major religion, encourages a certain self-criticism—the virtue of confession, the recognition of evil within you. Buddhists don't have that particularly, I don't think. Moslems certainly don't have much of a self-critical aspect. . . . But Christianity has that internal critique element. Particularly Catholicism, with the centrality of the confessional." The multiculturalist craze, says Bernstein, is Christian self-criticism gone off the rails. "This self-flagellation, it's like a new Victorianism. One of the consequences of multiculturalism is that minor sins are blown up into major ones. Under the influence of this ideology, normal abrasions of life are made into criminal offenses that have to be prosecuted." Gertrude Himmelfarb might have something to say about whether this should be called a new Victorianism, and most historians of religion attribute exaggerated self-criticism to Protestantism rather than Catholicism (remember Paul Tillich's "Protestant principle"). But Bernstein is undoubtedly right about everyday differences being turned into felonies, as any smoker, wearer of a fur coat, or speaker of standard ("non-inclusive") English can attest. Especially insightful is Bernstein's understanding of the problem created for Jewish identity. Escaping p.c. wrath by claiming the role of victim and declaring one's hostility to Western and Christian culture does not augur well for the future of Jewish-Christian relations. Fortunately, there are a good many Jews who, like Bernstein, understand the potential disaster inherent in that way of constructing Jewish identity.

■ When it rains . . . Big time embezzlement at the national office, fireworks and trials over ordaining homosexuals, a Boston bishop involved in extramarital affairs commits suicide. Now the Episcopal bishop of Maine takes a leave of absence after confessing to an extramarital affair. A national spokesman says church leaders are wondering whether "there isn't something increasingly difficult in the role of the bishop." "Many bishops are feeling the pressure to be all things to all people and are often seen as two-dimensional authority figures rather than as living, breathing, whole human beings. That doesn't excuse their actions, but I think the church has to begin at some point of compassion." No doubt it's tough. The Presiding Bishop "expressed his hope that healing could take place for both the diocese of Maine and the bishop." During his leave, the bishop will be undergoing therapy. Apparently the powerful desire to have sex with a woman other than one's wife is a form of sickness. The spokesman is right. Things are getting increasingly difficult.

■ My, my, aren't those creative people—as folk in the entertainment industry unselfconsciously refer to themselves—so very, well, creative. *The Tragic and Horrible Life of the Singing Nun* has opened in the West Village. It is a parody of the life of the late "singing nun," Jeanine Deckers. The *Times* applauds it as a revival of "camp humor." Sister Jeanine, who sang the 1960s hit song "Dominique," is portrayed as a simpleton who discovers that she is really a lesbian and is encouraged to act on her discovery by a man in drag (Sister Coco Callmeishmael—get it?) and a cigarette smoking Mother Superior (described as a "pervert fan") who presides over a convent named Our Lady of the Pernicious and Pestilent Wounds. There is also simulated sex on a piano with a priest who drops in. How creative can you get?

■ It is simply too late to be worrying about decency. That is the gist of the major argument employed by the Third Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in declaring unconstitutional the Communications Decency Act (CDA) overwhelmingly passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton. Chief Judge Dolores K. Sloviter declares that it is "evident that even if 'indecent' is read as parallel to 'patently offensive,' the terms would cover a broad range of material from contemporary films, plays, and books showing or describing sexual activities." The contention is that the possibility of depriving adults of indecent materials is a greater danger than exposing children to them. Moreover, it is noted that half of what appears on the Internet is generated outside the U.S., and therefore the CDA would not protect children from pornography and other items originating in, say, Amsterdam. In other words, given evolving community "standards," on the one hand, and technological developments, on the other, it is too late to worry about decency. In a concurring opinion, Judge Steward R. Dalzell goes further. He says that free speech protected by the First Amendment necessarily entails chaos and cacophony. "Just as the strength of the Internet is chaos, so the strength of our liberty depends upon the chaos and cacophony of the unfettered speech the First Amendment protects." It is an interesting doctrine, standing in sharpest contrast to the repeatedly emphasized claim of the founders that this political system can only be sustained by "ordered liberty." That is the sentiment caught in the second stanza of "America the Beautiful": "America! America! God mend thine every flaw, Confirm thy soul in self-control, Thy liberty in law." That was then, this is now. The American Civil Liberties Union pronounced itself surprised and pleased by the sweeping nature of the Third Circuit's decision. As well it should be.

■ "I was wrong to authorize taping that conversation. There are some things which are legal and ethical but are simply not right." That garbled

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apology came from Lane County district attorney Doug Harcleroad, who was responsible for the taping of a confession in an Oregon jail and had earlier announced that he might use it in the trial of the imprisoned penitent. The Archdiocese of Portland accepted the apology, but demanded "the destruction of the tape and the guarantee that never again will such a violation occur in the state of Oregon." Auxiliary Bishop Kenneth Steiner said, "Catholics believe, as a consequence of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that divine forgiveness is mediated sacramentally through the Church. A sacrament is a visible means instituted by Christ to communicate the power of God. Among the sacraments of the Church, the sacrament of penance is a privileged moment of forgiveness and reconciliation. By its very nature it must be secure and confidential." In a statement to the Catholics of the Archdiocese, he added, "Canon law forbids any confessor to betray a penitent by any means for any reason whatsoever. A confessor who knowingly violates the confidentiality of a confession incurs the penalty of automatic excommunication reserved to the Holy See. This penalty applies regardless of the matter confessed. The confidentiality of the sacrament of reconciliation is complete and absolute." (Reserved to the Holy See means that only Rome can remove the excommunication.) Steiner declared that the event constituted "a blatant violation of the sacrament" and a "direct threat to the practice of our religion." Non-Catholics joined in the protest against the infringement of priest-penitent, or clergy-counselee, confidentiality, although not as vigorously as one might have expected. Congressman Peter King of New York joined with others in introducing federal legislation to protect the "sanctity" of religious communication. But in the several religious communities and the media there was slight evidence of the shock that the Oregon transgression caused among Catholics. That is troubling. On the other hand, it is perhaps encouraging that, while fewer Catholics are going to confession regularly in recent years, they still know what it means and don't want anybody, least of all the government, messing with it.

■ A good deal of what others call "Eurocentrism" I rather like. Western culture is our culture and—on balance and considering the alternatives—it has been a good thing for us and for the world. One of the great strengths of Western culture is its general respect for the cultures of others, a twisted form of that respect being evident in the Western protest against "Eurocentrism." A notable instance of lack of respect is the journalistic habit of referring to Islamic "fundamentalism." We've been railing against this for some time, with slight effect. Fundamentalism is an American Protestant phenomenon with a very specific history, and imputing it to militant Islam is simply a lazy extension of the teaching of contempt with which fundamentalism has been treated here. But now the *Wall Street Journal* columnist George Melloan takes a great leap backward from there. "Since the ascendancy of the Ayatollah Khomeini in the 1970s there has been no real dividing line between church and state. The government's efforts to distance itself from evangelical terrorism abroad are thus not particularly persuasive." Church and state? Evangelical terrorism? Foreign affairs punditry that views the world through the prism of domestic prejudices is, if I may be permitted to say so, not particularly persuasive.

■ After years of pointing out to Father Richard McBrien the problems with his best-selling work, *Catholicism*, and asking in vain for revisions, the doctrinal committee of the national bishops' conference felt compelled to put out a carefully worded statement indicating that the work is not a reliable guide to Catholic teaching and should not be used in theological instruction. Of course McBrien protested, and colleagues such as Fr. Richard McCormick rallied to his defense. One of the more remarkable reactions is by Fr. Andrew Greeley, sociologist and novelist, in an open letter to the archbishop who heads the doctrinal committee. The letter was published in the *National Catholic Reporter*. If the bishops had "the courage of [their] convictions," Greeley writes, they would threaten McBrien with excommunication. "That's the way bishops used to act in the old days when bishops were really bishops instead of wishy-washy compromisers." Lest you think Greeley has gone over to the Lefebvrist side, remember that he is protesting the bishops' criticism of McBrien. Greeley continues, "This is not a very respectful letter, Archbishop. But then, I don't have much respect for you or most other American bishops." Lest you think Greeley is denying the authority of bishops, note that he adds, "The office of bishop is extremely important in the church." That is why he is outraged that "we are led in this critical time by proud, arrogant time-servers and careerists, men who couldn't care less about anything save their position in the Vatican political game, men who don't do good things but rather do the things they do well. Like issuing warnings and condemnations. You should be ashamed of yourselves." Friends of Andrew Greeley might ask themselves whether they are doing him any favor by publishing such outbursts from what appears to be his time of deepening and splenetic debility.

■ Paul Saito, an undergraduate with a 3.97 grade point average, was scheduled to give a graduation speech at Penn State. A university committee withdrew the invitation when Saito refused to remove from his speech this offending sentence: "I thank God for who he is, what he does, and how he

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has provided me strength and guidance in my life." President Clinton spoke at the graduation and thanked God for who he is. (Who God is, that is.) The rejection of Saito caused quite a stir in the university and the region. The university president, Graham Spanier, called the committee decision "flawed" and "unfortunate." But, according to this release from the Thomas More Catholic Association, the same president was responsible for banning a Christmas tree from the campus last December. That leaves many students "wondering if his administration is truly tolerant and understanding of religious thought." But of course you can think what you want, so long as you keep it to yourself.

■ What a to-do there was after it was revealed that Joe Klein of *Newsweek* is "Anonymous," the author of *Primary Colors,* a less than complimentary novel based on Clinton and his gang, including his media groupies. Klein had repeatedly and emphatically denied that he was the author, and at first was unapologetic when his cover was blown. "I'm not a politician, I'm a journalist," he said. "We're dealing with entertainment. Who's been hurt by this?" He added that "there are a lot of people on their high horses today skewering me . . . a lot of envious people out there." Soon, however, *Newsweek* was convening reeducation sessions, and Klein, with six million in the bank from sales of the book, was declaring himself ever so contrite. But his colleagues were not in a forgiving mood, reaching new heights of media smarminess in bemoaning Klein's sins. For instance, Sanford Ungar, dean of American University's School of Communication, said that "journalists are constantly measuring whether other people are telling the truth. I don't think a journalist has a higher right to lie about his work. He's going to pay a terrific penalty in terms of his credibility." Oh dear. Ken Auletta, the *New Yorker*'s media critic, declared himself to be "angry" because "Joe fibbed, and that's not acceptable. He not only hurts himself, he hurts the business of journalism. It grants a weapon to the enemies of the press, the feeling that we're all seedy, slimy bums." Well, "all" is taking it a bit too far. So what's going on here? There is a long and venerable literary tradition of authors using false names and no names, so that's not it. The simple fact is that Klein's media buddies were upset that he put one over on them, and he did so with a book that let down their side politically (92 percent of Washington journalists voted for Clinton in 1992). One reporter says, "Our only stock in trade is telling the truth, and Klein damaged that." It is to suppress a laugh. Any given day's reading of the *New York Times* or *Washington Post* provides abundant refutation of such pitiable journalistic conceits. To cite but one example, David Shaw, media critic of the *Los Angeles Times,* has written two remarkable series on media malfeasance, one on the reporting of the abortion debate and another on media treatment of John Paul II. He demonstrated, as though it needed demonstration, numerous instances of consistent misrepresentation and outright prevarication by the establishment media. This is a pattern of mendacity that has been going on for years regarding questions of premier importance for our society and the world. Yet not one of the major newspapers, networks, or media journals has paid the slightest attention to Shaw's work. It is much more uncomfortable to address the well-substantiated indictment of an industry than to self-righteously pillory a talented colleague who broke the club rules and, in the course of doing so, exposed the fatuities of hacks who are poignantly eager to be taken as seriously as they take themselves.

■ A Republican "moderate" is moderate in relation to what is viewed as the extremism of the Republican Party, and is almost by definition pro-choice. Thus, for instance, Governors Whitman of New Jersey and Weld of Massachusetts are routinely described as moderates. They supported the President's veto of the infanticide ban (a.k.a. the partial-birth abortion ban). All but fifteen of the Republicans in the House of Representatives voted for the ban. Weld and Whitman are on the fringe of the Republican Party. But it seems most journalists just can't get the hang of this. For instance, in Illinois a little-known state representative, Al Salvi, was an extremist (meaning he was uncompromisingly pro-life). He ran against the very well-known Lieutenant Governor, Bob Kustra, for the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate and beat him quite solidly (48-43 percent). Said Salvi, "I was told over and over again, 'Don't run, Al; this is David and Goliath.' I think they forgot that David won."

■ In the golden oldies department, HBO cable television on May 6 showed *Priestly Sins: Sex and the Catholic Church.* Readers will remember Philip Jenkins' treatment of this question ("The Uses of Clerical Scandal," February). Jenkins, author of *Pedophiles and Priests* (Oxford University Press), says the HBO production "could have been done four years ago at the height of the hysteria on this subject, and probably was." The producers lined up the usual suspects, including ex-priest Richard Sipe. Even his claims were misrepresented, however. The show implied that Sipe claims that 3,000 out of 50,000 priests in the U.S. are sexual abusers, when he in fact asserts that that number have such tendencies. As usual, the program blamed celibacy, overlooking the fact that sexual abuse by Catholic priests (between .2 to 1.7 percent) is lower than among noncelibate Protestant clergy (between 2 to 3 percent). And there was good old Father John McNeill, a gay activist and cofounder of the homosexual organization Dignity, opining, as gay activists are wont to opine, that almost everybody is a closet gay. "Moreover," says Bill Donohue of the Catholic League in his criticism

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of the HBO program, "we hear nothing about false accusations, tarnished careers, greedy lawyers, or obsequious therapists. And there is nothing about anti-Catholic bigotry." So what else is new? Well, there is this. Before the media bubble burst, Fr. Andrew Greeley went on record with the view that priestly pedophilia was "the greatest crisis in Catholicism since the Reformation." HBO makes Greeley a piker, declaring it the greatest crisis since the fourth century. Why the fourth century? The program did not say. I have always thought the eleventh was a real bummer.

■ There is a new note of urgency, even of solemnity, in statements by Catholic bishops in the wake of recent developments around partial-birth abortion, doctor-assisted suicide, and same-sex marriage. The language of *Evangelium Vitae* about our being engaged in a contest between "the culture of life" and "the culture of death" seems to have struck a responsive chord, also in the general public. In recent months, there has been a sharp drop in the number of Catholic statements urging people to find a "balance" between the life questions and other matters in public dispute, such as welfare reform or affirmative action. President Clinton's veto of the ban against infanticide and court rulings on euthanasia have changed the climate dramatically. Events conspire to bring matters to a head. In a pastoral letter by Archbishop Francis Stafford of Denver, for instance, there is this: "The dignity of human life is being eclipsed for everyone. The marriage covenant is no longer how our civil and media pace-setters interpret family, civilization, and religious faith. The modern world is being drained of authentic life. The absence of objective truth in the exercise of personal freedom opens the door to the manipulative abuse of power and totalitarianism. Against our will, a new kind of well-heeled, spin-controlled barbarism is being insinuated into daily life, and into the fabric of our families." The Archbishop declares, "The direction of the modern state is *against* the dignity of human life. These spring decisions harbinger a dramatic intensifying of the conflict between the Catholic Church and governing civil authorities." That is not the voice of an immigrant group eager to demonstrate that it "belongs" in America. It is the confident voice of a leadership prepared to challenge the legitimacy of the governing authorities and, if pushed far enough, to challenge the regime itself. I expect Clinton badly miscalculated the consequences of his veto. Some pro-life activists complain that the outrage over partial-birth abortion distracts attention from the millions of other abortions. That is to miss the point. The partial-birth abortion controversy has succeeded in alerting millions of Americans to the current state of abortion law and practice. Despite more than two decades of public dispute, nine out of ten Americans still think abortion is permitted only in the first trimester, and then for rare circumstances. The focus on partial-birth abortions is changing that. Coming in quick succession, these three questions—infanticide, euthanasia, and same-sex marriage—have galvanized many Protestant and Catholic leaders to speak out with unwonted directness. One expects that their witness will be increasingly specific with respect to electoral choices as bishops and others refuse to be intimidated by the usual outcry about violating "the separation of church and state." If anyone still thinks that talk about the culture of death is just high papal rhetoric, it is time for him to return from sabbatical.

■ Oops. If I've said it once, I've said it more than thirty-seven times: Peter Steinfels of the *Times* is one of the best religion reporters around. But there was a bit of confusion with a recent story on the Tridentine Mass celebrated at St. Patrick's Cathedral. I'm quoted as thinking that those who are enamored of the Tridentine rite believe that Vatican Council II was an aberration in the Church's history and are radically out of step with this pope. In fact, I discussed a number of reasons why many people love the Tridentine Mass, some of them entirely legitimate, and then added that there were *also* those of a Lefebvrist bent who view it as a protest against the council. Although some of these folk think of themselves as papal loyalists, they are very much out of step with John Paul II, who is emphatically a man of the council. So please hold off on those letters of protest. While I could not be there, I understand the celebration at St. Patrick's was all-stops-pulled splendor. Cardinal O'Connor and ninety-nine other bishops around the country do well, I think, to permit the celebration of a rite that helps in bearing witness to the fullness of Catholic tradition. At the same time, and in friendly disagreement with some Tridentine enthusiasts, I believe the Mass can be celebrated in all its majesty, mystery, and splendor using the current English rite. It takes some effort, of course, but that's what worship is supposed to take.

■ The July issue of *Catholic World Report* carried a devastating article by St. Louis University historian James Hitchcock on the background of Father Robert Drinan's political career. Interest in Fr. Drinan was recently rekindled when he published on the op-ed page of the *New York Times* an article supporting President Clinton's veto of the bill banning partial-birth abortions. Elected to Congress in 1970 and serving several terms, Drinan was a staunch supporter of the unlimited abortion license and was routinely cited by other Catholic politicians as an authority who justified their position of "personally opposed but . . ." During his years in Congress, Jesuit authorities regularly declared that Drinan's political career had the full support of the

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Society of Jesus, and even critics of Drinan praised him when he decided not to run for reelection after the Pope explicitly forbade priests to hold political office. Using information obtained from the archives of the New England Province of the Society, Hitchcock tells a very different story. It seems that Drinan and his superiors strongly resisted the repeated directives of the Jesuit Father General Pedro Arrupe in Rome that Drinan should not run for Congress and, later, should not run for reelection. More precisely, the story is that the New England Jesuits procrastinated, prevaricated, and, for all practical purposes, defied the express wishes of Arrupe. This strikes some people as remarkable behavior for an order that was originally defined by the most rigorous obedience to the Pope and the Father General (the "black pope"). Now the head of the New England Province, Fr. William A. Barry, has circulated a letter in which he strongly attacks by name the Jesuit who allegedly obtained the archival material used by Professor Hitchcock. He says that he is "outraged that such documents could become public," but the letter does not contain even a suggestion that Hitchcock's article is inaccurate. Fr. Barry concludes: "I am writing to you, my brother Jesuits, because I believe that our life is founded on trust in one another and, especially, on trust in our superiors. I am sure that you join me in outrage and sadness that another Jesuit is said to have been the source of this breach of trust." If Hitchcock's article is accurate, and there is no reason to believe it is not, the breach of trust and insubordination to superiors would seem to lie elsewhere.

■ Consider the brouhaha over Mrs. Clinton's meetings with "Doctor" Jean Houston, a New Age guru, which were made public by the *Washington Post*'s Bob Woodward. Ms. Houston, who turns out not to have the doctorate in psychology from Columbia that she claimed, promotes the Greek goddess Athena as a "spiritual archetype" and is otherwise expert at helping people to "live more intensely." In response to the controversy, Mrs. Clinton said, intensely, that she is a sincere believer in her Methodist faith. She speaks of how her faith was formed by *motive* magazine, a leftist Methodist publication that celebrated the drug culture and deplored U.S. imperialism before it went out of business a long time ago. The Clintons now attend Foundry United Methodist Church, whose pastor, J. Philip Wogaman, is a prominent defender of gay rights and the abortion license. So it is a Methodist faith, of sorts. Diane Knippers of the Institute on Religion and Democracy says, "Her church has failed her. Like many Americans, she has sadly sought spiritual meaning outside Christianity." The United Methodist bishop of Arkansas, however, disagrees: "I think it's marvelous that [Mrs. Clinton] is having experiences like this. She is one of the most profound lay theologians in the United Methodist Church," said Bishop Richard Wilke. We are in no position to know whether the bishop is right about the state of lay theology among Methodists, but his comment would seem to underscore Mrs. Knippers' point.

■ Each year the editors of *Christianity Today* ask a diverse panel of scholars, clergy, writers, and the such to nominate the "Top 25" books of the year. Of books published in 1995, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, edited by Charles Colson and myself, came in second. That is gratifying, of course. It is remarkable that a book of essays should be rated so highly. More important, and in the words of the editors of *Christianity Today*, this "constitutes a significant endorsement of the aims of ECT by leading evangelical thinkers. Coverage of the evangelical response to this historic statement, issued in March 1994, has tended to focus on critics of ECT. Perhaps this emphasis has been misleading." Perhaps? I hope it will not be thought indelicate if I suggest that the editorial comment might apply also to coverage in *Christianity Today*. Perhaps.

■ A "temper tantrum" is the way Bishop James McHugh of Camden, New Jersey, describes President Clinton's reaction to Bob Dole's criticism of his veto of the partial-birth abortion ban. At the veto ceremony, Clinton surrounded himself with five women who had had late-term abortions, although apparently none had undergone the procedure the legislation banned. "It's not simply his intemperance that troubles me," writes Bishop McHugh. "It's the blatant insult to the Catholic Church and to every individual Catholic. I am outraged that Mr. Clinton, President of the United States, has singled out the religious identity of two of the five women—the two he claims are Catholic. What is the meaning of this?" McHugh goes on to say that the meaning is that the President of the United States is interposing himself as a "judge on the moral validity of Catholic teaching on abortion." In reaction to Dole's criticism Clinton said, "The President is the only place in this system of ours where there's only one person who can stand up for people with no voice, no power, who are going to be eviscerated." McHugh notes that it is not Bill Clinton who is standing up for the millions of unborn children who are eviscerated by the abortion license. Nor is the office of the presidency authorized to adjudicate moral and religious doctrine about our responsibility for the helpless. Bishop McHugh concludes: "Up till now I have had many questions about President Clinton. But after this episode and having seen the irrational emotional outburst, I am truly frightened, not only for unborn children, but for the religious freedom the Constitution promises all of us." Strong words, those, and not unrepresentative of statements issuing from bishops

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and other religious leaders who say that only in recent months have they come to take the full measure of the arrogance and unscrupulousness of the current occupant of the White House. For conservative Protestants that knowledge came early and easily. For Catholics, including many bishops, it means breaking with a century of "progressive" politics generally, if confusedly, associated with the Democratic Party. November will tell whether that break, which has been happening in stages over the last several elections, is now definitive.

■ Beginning with the January issue, FT will carry classified ads. (No "personals," please.) We have been thinking about this for some time. Of course, we expect it will be a modest source of additional income, which is badly needed, but that's not the main thing. The main thing is that, over our few years together, FT readers have become a large community of shared interests, and classifieds are a convenient and economical way of alerting people to conferences, projects, job openings, things for sale, and whatever. To place your ad, contact Richard Vaughan at Publishing Management Associates, 129 Phelps Avenue, Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108. Phone: (815) 398-8569; Fax: (815) 398-8579.

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT: On Promise Keepers, *Christian Century*, March 6, 1996. Jim Wall on abortion, *Christian Century*, January 31, 1996. Wilfred M. McClay on Irving Kristol, *Commentary*, February 1996. Timothy Sherratt on Catholic social teaching, *Public Justice Report*, March-April 1996. Leonard Klein on church-sponsored abortions, *Lutheran Forum*, February 1996. *The Management Methods of Jesus* by Bob Briner, cited in *New York Times*, March 16, 1996. A. Akbar Muhammad quoted in *New York Times*, March 24, 1996. Tom Sine on reduced church giving and government programs, *Christian Century*, March 13, 1996. Evelyn Pluhar's *Beyond Prejudice* reviewed by Colin McGinn, *New Republic*, April 8, 1996. Frans de Waal's *Good Natured* reviewed by Derek Bickerton, *New York Times Book Review*, March 24, 1996. *God: A Biography* by Jack Miles reviewed by Dale Patrick, *Theology Today*, April 1996. Karen Raschke of Planned Parenthood quoted in *Life Insight*, March 1996. *Cultural Selection* by Gary Taylor, quoted in *New York Times*, April 5, 1996. Richard Bernstein on political correctness, *National Catholic Register*, April 14, 1996. On adulterous Episcopal bishop, *Boston Globe*, April 19, 1996. On *The Tragic and Horrible Life of the Singing Nun*, Catholic League press release, April 18, 1996. On Communications Decency Act and the Third Circuit Court, *New York Times*, June 13, 1996. On taped confession in Oregon, *Origins*, June 6, 1996. George Melloan on church and state, *Wall Street Journal*, July 1, 1996. Fr. Andrew Greeley letter in defense of Fr. Richard McBrien, *National Catholic Reporter*, June 14, 1996. On religious intolerance at Penn State University, news release, May 24, 1996. On Joe Klein and journalistic ethics, *International Herald Tribune*, July 19, 1996. On Women's Ordination Conference, *Ecumenical News International*, April 12, 1996. On "moderate" Republicans, *NAE Washington Insight*, May 1996. Letter on trust within Jesuit order, from Fr. William A. Barry, dated July 12, 1996. Diane Knippers on Hillary Clinton's Methodism, press release from Institute on Religion and Democracy, June 25, 1996. "Top 25" books of 1995, *Christianity Today*, April 29, 1996. Bishop McHugh on President Clinton, *Catholic Star Herald*, May 31, 1996.

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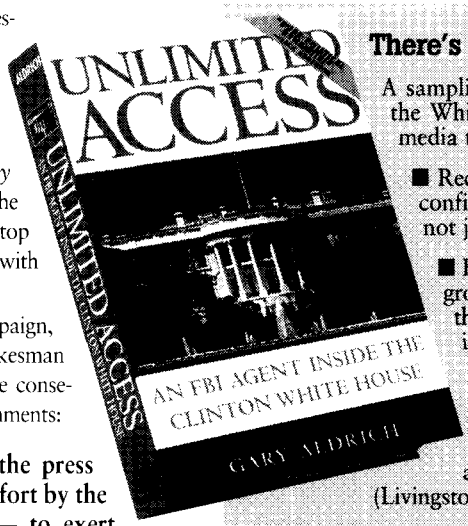

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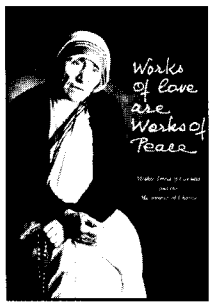

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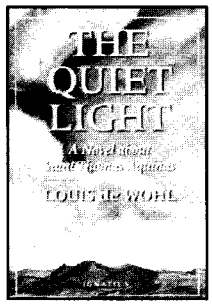

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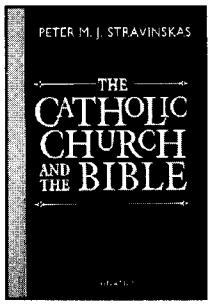

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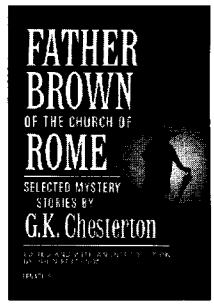

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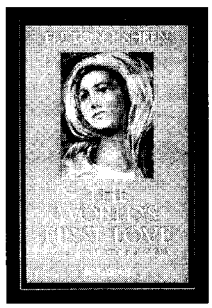

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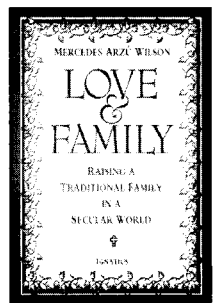

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